

Translating  
Shakespeare  
for the Twenty-First  
Century

Edited by  
Rui Carvalho Homem  
and Ton Hoenselaars



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**STUDIES IN LITERATURE 35**

# Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century



**STUDIES IN LITERATURE 35**

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# Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century

## Introduction

Rui Carvalho Homem

“There has never been a better time to study translations”: Susan Bassnett’s confident assertion appeared in an article published in 1996, in a context in which it could already be received as a consensual confirmation of a state of affairs – rather than as another militant bid on behalf of the emerging discipline which Bassnett had so often championed in the preceding decade.<sup>1</sup> If anything, the field of Translation studies, with its predominantly theoretical bent, as well as the practical study of translations from a variety of disciplinary standpoints, have since acquired an even greater centrality in theory, criticism, and academia. Conferences are held under titles that stress the extent to which translation has become “a crossroads of disciplines”<sup>2</sup>; and the breadth and diversity of contributions at such events (as in the ensuing publications) confirm and further George Steiner’s remark of more than a quarter of a century ago, that “the study of the theory and practice of translation [...] provides a synapse for work in

<sup>1</sup> Susan Bassnett, “The Meek or the Mighty: Reappraising the Role of the Translator,” in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, edited by Román Álvarez and Carmen-África Vidal (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 10-24 (p. 22).

<sup>2</sup> The title of an international conference held at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, Portugal, 14-15 November 2002.

[a broad range of both] established and newly evolving disciplines.”<sup>3</sup>

“Crossroads,” “synapse”: metaphors could be legion, but the two just instanced, drawing as they do (respectively) on an arrangement of space that will enable contact and mobility, and on the neural connections that permit and boost the spread of information, are arguably congenial to some of today’s prevalent concerns. Irrespective of their markedly distinct provenance, the two metaphors evince a framework for the processes of reading and (re)writing involved in translation, and for their study within the discipline of translation studies, which aims to counter the logic of a closed system, and in all respects favours a relational emphasis. “Translation [...] is the visible sign of the openness of the literary system,” André Lefevere once wrote.<sup>4</sup>

The essay in which Lefevere’s remark belongs was part of a 1985 volume, edited by Theo Hermans, that remains a fundamental reference for the rise of Translation studies to its present disciplinary centrality. If Bassnett’s assertion, cited above, sounded confident that it was no longer necessary to argue a well-won cause, most contributions to the collection edited by Hermans a decade earlier still had the committed vehemence of the (ostensibly) yet peripheral argument, *vis-à-vis* the supposed resistance of the academic establishment to the “new” or “alternative paradigm” mentioned in the titles both of the editor’s Introduction and of Lefevere’s essay. Hence the editor’s accusing diagnosis of the place held by the study of translation in academia – “at best, marginal;” “[treated] with barely veiled condescension”; “[with] neglect.”<sup>5</sup> And hence Lefevere’s combative description of the role of translation with regard to canon-formation and the hierarchies of writing: “[translation] opens the way to what can be

<sup>3</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 250.

<sup>4</sup> André Lefevere, “Why Waste our Time on Rewrites?: The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm,” in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, edited by Theo Hermans (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 215-43 (p. 237).

<sup>5</sup> Theo Hermans, “Introduction: Translation Studies and a New Paradigm,” in *The Manipulation of Literature*, 7.

called both subversion and transformation, depending on where the guardians of the dominant poetics, the dominant ideology stand.”<sup>6</sup>

Most of the contributions to the present volume emerge from a practical commitment to the translation of Shakespearian drama, an endeavour in the course of which the theoretical concerns of “Translation studies” will not often obtain explicit acknowledgement. But such concerns have become so characteristic of the prevailing climate within literary studies, and have such marked overlap with work done in Shakespeare studies (whether its focus is the page or the stage), that they can hardly be bypassed and ignored. Indeed, claims on behalf of the status of the target text that ultimately elide its hierarchical dependence on the source text have concurred with the countercanonical drift in literary studies, and with its appertaining questioning of the “original,” of distinctions between the “creative” and the “derivative” (traditionally so detrimental to translation). Such convergence reinforces the bid for an understanding of writing as inevitably always rewriting, and of every text as intertext.<sup>7</sup> The elision of the original/translation hierarchy may seem, in fact, to vindicate the unspoken and unproblematic perception of most non-specialised readers, for whom the version of a foreign text available in their own language has always been the “original.” But the same perception also has a contradictory underlying assumption: the assumption that translation might be a transparent and incontrovertible mediation, and its outcome an object somehow effaced by its very accomplishment – rather than the contingent but also autonomous text which it is the point of most theoretical emphases today to render “visible” and recognisably distinct.

<sup>6</sup> Lefevere, “Why Waste our Time on Rewrites?”, 237.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lefevere, “Why Waste our Time on Rewrites?”, *passim*; Susan Bassnett, “When is a Translation not a Translation?”, in Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 25–40 (p. 25); *The Practices of Literary Translation: Constraints and Creativity*, edited by Jean Boase-Beier and Michael Holman (Manchester: St Jerome, 1998), 1–17.

When applied to the domain of Shakespeare's translation and reception, the argument which levels the original and its rewritings foregrounds the same duality. On the one hand, it will underline that, for most readerships and audiences, in particular in western Europe, Shakespeare indeed "wrote" or "spoke" (say) French or German; the latter language indeed epitomises (with the famous Schlegel/Tieck text) the case of translations of Shakespeare which were so closely assimilated by a national literature that they became indissociable from it. But this process also emphasises, on the other hand, that the texts and stage traditions which materialise such assimilation derive from it an autonomous existence that makes them in and by themselves discrete cultural artefacts, and important factors of the target culture and of its literary and theatrical history.

This context for the critical study of Shakespeare in translation is further enriched by the fact that the whole rationale of comparative literature as an academic domain has been to favour ways of reading which tend to explode the self-contained study of national literatures. This is a trend which will obviously prove enticing for the translation scholar, all the more so since Susan Bassnett famously reversed the hierarchy between comparative literature and Translation studies by declaring the former "an important branch" of the latter, which was thus promoted to the position of "the principal discipline" in that dual relationship.<sup>8</sup> The impact of this is compounded by the fairly broad approval which can today be obtained for the assertion that "cross-cultural relations [...] all [...] appear to be modes of translation."<sup>9</sup> However, bringing comparative studies (irrespective of which are its principal and subsidiary disciplines) to focus on Shakespeare will not only highlight the alterity that the Shakespearean text encounters and undergoes when it is rewritten in other languages, but also, concomitantly, the alterity that those texts so often foreground

<sup>8</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, rev. edn. (London: Routledge, 1991), 136.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Iser, "On Translatability: Variables of Interpretation," *The European English Messenger* IV:1 (Spring, 1995), 30-38 (p. 31).

in the very scope of their representations, in the variety of their linguistic resources and of their characters.

The breadth and diversity of such forms of alterity is starkly put in evidence by all the studies dedicated to the dramatic construction of the mindsets and voices of Shakespeare's "strangers" or "others," concurring with the renewed attention that the play with foreign languages and national stereotypes in Shakespearean drama has obtained. Postcolonial theory may be just the latest discipline to intersect both with Translation studies and with Shakespeare studies in a way which is relevant to this theme and with a keenness evidenced, in each case, by the ensuing spate of publications; before and beyond that, image studies have continually yielded very enlightening perceptions with respect to alterity in Shakespeare, besides the contributions given since the 1960s and '70s by a few studies not necessarily defined by a disciplinary affiliation.<sup>10</sup> An important common element within this broad critical concern is the emphasis laid in recent years on the dynamic and the relational characteristics of linguistic and national otherness – read as consisting of constructs rather than renderings of previously defined images (hence "diegetic" rather than "mimetic"<sup>11</sup>), and always "tak[ing] place in a polarity between self and Other," defined through "the dynamics between 'auto-image' and 'hetero-image.'"<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> With his *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (London: Croom Helm, 1972), Leslie Fiedler gave a seminal contribution to this area of studies which predated by a fair number of years the interest in alterities in Shakespeare later to be shown both by postcolonial studies and women's studies. For a collection of essays which samples viewpoints on Shakespeare from the standpoint of postcolonial studies, see *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, edited by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). For a thorough consideration of national representations in Shakespeare which assumes and extends the methodologies of image studies, see A. J. Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: A Study of Stage Characters and National Identity in English Renaissance Drama, 1558-1642* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Joep Leerssen, "The Rhetoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey," *Poetics Today* 21:2 (Summer 2000), 267-92 (p. 271).

The above should make it obvious that the place occupied today by a concern with translation (practically or conceptually) in cultural and literary studies must prove congenial to emphases which have also come to prevail in Shakespeare studies. “Alternative” and “subversive” strategies for reading Shakespeare have increasingly become mainstream over the past two decades, and they will find the querying of textual hierarchies proposed by Translation studies a welcome additional weapon for their theoretical/critical panoply. And that will be no more than the textual counterpart to all the readings which, powered by the attraction of tackling the centre of the canon from a number of politically and culturally marginal standpoints, have informed so many approaches to Shakespeare defined by gender, race, geographies, historico-political contingencies. The study of Shakespeare in other languages, places, societies, can be duly complemented by a study of other languages, places, and societies in Shakespeare – and the welcome contributions that derive from this relationship will certainly be afforded by the broad understanding of translation and of translation studies defined above.

The result is that pivotal position of Shakespeare with regard to discourse on translation which Dirk Delabastita already emphasised a decade ago in his introduction to *European Shakespeares*.<sup>13</sup> But a fascinating aspect of that position which has not been given its due so often is that it can indeed boast a long lineage, since the very making of Elizabethan dramatic texts, depending as it did on the liberal use of a vast array of sources, at the limits (or beyond them) of what today would pass for plagiarism, foregrounds the extent to which the cultural strengths of a particularly prolific moment in literary history depended on appropriations and rewritings of source texts, a crucially productive aspect of the agon between Classical and vernacular. Ovid and Plutarch are just two (though probably the most prominent) of

<sup>13</sup> Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D’huylst, “Introduction,” *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, edited by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D’huylst (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: Benjamins, 1993), 9–24 (p. 9 and *passim*).

the textual presences without which early modern literature (English literature, in particular) would hardly be the same. And if Shakespeare's appropriations put in evidence the extent of his debts to such authors and sources, the cultural consequence of those appropriations also makes clear that many of his sources would hardly have risen to the prominence they enjoy in European cultural history if it were not for their Shakespearean rewritings.<sup>14</sup> This emphasises the immense value of translations and translators for the definition (in form and in content) of the period's literary culture and of its most canonical *corpus*, as in recent years has often been acknowledged.<sup>15</sup> Those who practise and/or study Shakespeare (in) translation can only be gratified by an awareness that the object of their work was first constituted by strategies which are analogous to their own task – whether the Shakespearean rewriting was interlingual or “merely” intralingual, as in the case of the mostly transgeneric reworkings of English sources.

Tracing this particular lineage from the early modern period can indeed contribute to retrieving from the obscurity of their “unfashionable” niches some traditional forms of scholarship with a bearing on sources, and in this the concern with translation will find further support from that foregrounding of the materiality of texts which has recently come under renewed attention under the academic label of “book studies.” Exploding the traditionally narrow boundaries of the domains of bibliography and textual studies, more and more work is being done on the wealth of implications to be drawn from textual variants and divergent editions, a foregrounding of “the instability of Shakespeare's texts”<sup>16</sup> done in a way which reunites the factual con-

<sup>14</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 284.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Steiner, *After Babel*, 260. Also Jonathan Bate's recent admission: “My research for a new book on the Elizabethans has also made me all the more convinced of the centrality of translation to the flowering of English literature in that period” (Jonathan Bate, “Books of the Year,” *TLS* [December 6, 2002], 7).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Taylor, *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8.



cerns of the textual scholar and the hermeneutic purposes of the literary critic, rather often kept apart throughout most of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Such work also focuses on the lineage of dramatic texts in their readerly afterlives, with the successive entrances of different editions from the printing house to the scene of reading where they seek the favour of book buyers; it foregrounds the paratexts which put forward the often competing claims of rival publishing ventures of the same texts for priority, accuracy, and truth either to stage practice or to surmised authorial intention; and it integrates all of this with the study of the socio-economics of publishing and of the early modern emergence of a sense of “authorial identification with printed writing.”<sup>18</sup> Such directions of study will hardly be indifferent to anyone who finds him/herself at the intersection of Translation studies and Shakespeare studies, or even in the process of preparing a translation of Shakespeare for publication. Indeed, the new and extended scope now obtained by textual scholarship and bibliography, by the making of texts and the making of books, can productively converge with the skills proper to editing and to (the study of) translation to define a broad-ranging panorama of forms of textual competence which will only benefit from their mutual awareness.<sup>19</sup>

In the ebb and flow of critical tendencies, this textual and bibliographic emphasis owes its present currency, to a certain extent, to the need to counter (or at least to balance) the theatrical emphasis that prevailed throughout most of the past century in the determination of how Shakespeare’s texts were to be read, rhetorically and pragmatically. There is the need, in other words, to mitigate the argument

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bill Bell, “English Studies and the History of the Book,” *The European English Messenger* XI: 2 (Autumn 2002), 27-33.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1; cf. David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and John Jones, *Shakespeare at Work* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> See also Dirk Delabastita, “More Alternative Shakespeares,” in *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, edited by A. Luis Pujante and Ton Hoenselaars (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 113-33.

which derives from the unquestioned realisation that Shakespeare's dramatic texts were written for performance, the precept that reading them as anything other than playscripts is a fundamental misunderstanding.<sup>20</sup> Against this, the argument (re)emerges that a historically alert reading will have to include the ballast of meanings and the cultural consequence which accrued with the long tradition of reading Shakespeare's plays *as literature*, on the page – a tradition which arguably had its inception still in Shakespeare's time, and indeed came to be the mainstream of the editorial and critical efforts which focused on the Shakespearean canon from the eighteenth-century editors all through the Romantic era to the late nineteenth-century institutionalisation of Shakespeare and beyond.<sup>21</sup>

The stage/page dichotomy is, of course, a *locus classicus* of the critical discussion of translation(s), and (as apparently is always the case) the issue takes on a particular keenness when Shakespeare is its textual object. But its mutually exclusive nexus can be countered (or somewhat diluted) by the already described hegemonic tendency of Translation studies, and hence by the spread of the concept of "translation" to embrace many practices involved in reconfiguring texts in a variety of media. Susan Bassnett reminds us that there is a tradition, in English, for using the word "translation" to designate the production or the staging of a play<sup>22</sup> – its transportation from the page to the stage. The range of theoretical standpoints on the relative necessity of a close relationship between the interlingual translation of a dramatic text and its subsequent intersemiotic translation is fairly broad: should an "adequate" rendering of a dramatic text from one verbal code to another perforce take into account the requirements of its ultimate fulfilment in a medium in which signification depends on the

<sup>20</sup> For a careful consideration of this argument and of its limitations, see Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, 6-7 and *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*, 1-2; Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Bassnett, "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre," in Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures*, 94.

cooperation of linguistic structures with non-verbal systems? Should it somehow anticipate or subsume the conditions of its “performability” (or even the conditions of a specific production)? Or should, on the contrary, the two forms of translation remain autonomous, translators concerning themselves with the many challenges proper to the rhetorical and stylistic features of the text (even if necessarily alert to its genre-specific elements), and leaving it to the professionals of the theatre to take care of its subsequent, final rendering?

The question is just one of many raised by a word and a concept which have been showing a remarkable tendency to claim all that is writerly as their proper field of reference. And when a concern with translation, as hegemonic as it has proved to be, coincides with the study of Shakespeare, traditionally held to be a privileged *locus* for the representation of the human experience in its complexity, and verifiably the “centre of the canon,” the temptation may be strong to incur the ultimate hubris of claiming that nothing is alien to translation – and to Shakespeare-in/and-translation.

The present collection comprises a wide range of approaches to its overall theme. But, even when it proves the vastness of that theme, it is not informed by an ambition of totality. Some of the essays here collected indeed show a keen awareness that such an ambition would entail the risk of eliding fundamental distinctions and thus jeopardising the operative value of the concepts and terminologies required by the topic(s) under discussion. Dirk Delabastita takes for his point of departure precisely the realisation that the theme of Shakespeare in/and translation can be approached from a variety of “discursive positions” in the face of which an initial gesture of clarification is required – his being that of “the translation scholar” *vis-à-vis* that of the practising translator. Delabastita’s point is not, though, that the two positions should be deemed incompatible or condemned to exist in irredeemable opposition: his preliminary overview, in the opening stage of his essay, of some of the misunderstandings and reservations that had to be faced by Translation studies from its inception as an academic discipline indeed vindicates the discipline’s relevance for

concerns that practical translators will inevitably take to heart – but, by virtue of that very argument, becomes a bid for the necessary complementarity of the two perspectives.

That complementarity is ensured, in most of the essays in the volume, by the fact that their authors are both academics and translators of Shakespeare: their essays instance, to retrieve T. S. Eliot's memorable phrase into a different context, "the practitioner's criticism."<sup>23</sup> In the case of Alessandro Serpieri, the tools of the literary scholar and of the semiotician combine with a substantial experience as a translator to produce a carefully organised and discriminating chart of the several challenges to be faced, at different levels, by the linguistically and culturally aware practitioner. Serpieri foregrounds challenges that concern the historical contexts, the turbulence of Shakespeare's age – and he does so in a register and a diction that reveal the impact which the new contextualisms (in particular Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism) have had on Shakespeare studies over the past two decades. He underlines the challenges that are posed, as well, by the immediate literary context defined by the Shakespearean canon itself; he sets out with scholarly rigour the complexities of textual history; and he acknowledges the specificities of translating drama, the semiotic diversity of the demands it puts on the translator, its required complementarity of linguistic and extra-linguistic codes. Neologism is highlighted as a particular factor amongst the forms of "energy" the translator will have to cope with, a creativity in the use of language which is due both to personal characteristics of the dramatist's and to cultural-historical circumstances that give an added edge to language. As one of the broader aspects of his argument, Serpieri retrieves Jakobson's famous analysis of translation into three kinds – intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic – to argue that the translator of Shakespeare will have to practise all three. This integrated understanding of his/her task requires the translator to wield some competence in such other domains as the

<sup>23</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 3d edn. (London: Faber, 1951), 32.

history of language, the prosody active in the traditions of verse in both languages, or the rhetorical patterns which can be analysed in Shakespeare's texts. This can be subsumed in Serpieri's plea for an understanding of the translator's task as including that of an editor.

The linguistic and cultural distance from which the translator views Shakespeare's texts is taken by Serpieri to be an asset rather than a liability: it affords a "vantage point" from which insights can be gained that may escape the native speaker of English, sometimes not alert to some lexical peculiarities, or to turns of phrase that may enjoy a continued but historically changed currency. An intriguingly different perspective on the implications of a marked distance in language, in historical experience, and hence in the specific forms of "a cultural setup," is offered by Alexander Shurbanov's study of a range of difficulties besetting the translation of Shakespeare into Bulgarian. Shurbanov, who has translated a fair number of canonical English authors, and has in recent years devoted much effort to charting and narrating the reception of Shakespeare in Eastern Europe, in particular in the twentieth century and within the former socialist bloc, also takes on the dual condition of "a translator and a student of translation" to identify several related groups of problems. One of these concerns the strategy of compensation (sometimes through coinage) required by the consequences which an asymmetrical historical experience has had on the resources developed by the source and target languages: the vocabulary of power and social distinction are particularly relevant in this respect, evincing as it does the difference in outlook between the practices, the aspirations, even the accoutrements, weapons and insignia of dominant groups in the contexts between which the translator will have to mediate. Asymmetry will also prove evident when language is used in a rhetorically richer and more creative way, yielding representations whose specific forms will hardly correspond, by reason of the differences in imaginative patterns developed within the two cultures: wordplay and the "telltale names in the comedies" are particularly challenging aspects of this. A consequence both of socio-political forms and of differences in the

verbalisation of a cultural outlook, issues of stylistic register will also challenge the translator to find adequate renderings for the tonal variety which results from specific modes of social interaction. All in all, Shurbanov's demonstration of the rigour but also the flexibility required of the translator of Shakespeare into a non-western European language is informed by his plea for an understanding of translation as "the art of compromise, though the compromise should never be arbitrary."

Shurbanov's text reminds us of the several respects in which the course of history will determine the shape of linguistic and cultural patterns, and will hence prove crucial for the challenges to be faced by the translator. Though in a very different way, Jean-Michel Déprats's text has historicity for the core of its concerns. The mostly theatrical bent of Déprats's perspectives as a translator and a critic is clear from his point of departure: "The main issue faced in modern staging is the question of history." From this awareness he derives an analogy (that translations are in this as in many other respects like stagings) which will underlie the elucidation of his other concerns in this essay, at the centre of which is the always controversial topic of the historical positioning of a translation. For Déprats, the translator is always defined by a liminal situation, and when his/her text belongs to an already remote period that liminality finds him/her wavering between the pastness of the text and the presentness of the translator's circumstance and audience, and perpetually faced with the dilemma of whether to try and historicise or to modernise his/her linguistic medium. As Déprats shows, both attitudes have undeniable shortcomings, but the persuasiveness of his exposure of the specific pretence of archaisation, and his identification of the rhetorical processes which buttress that artifice, leave little doubt as to which of the two possibilities he considers the lesser evil: archaising translation, he eventually tells us, "tends to deny us access to the text. Its only horizon is scholarly erudition; its only literary affinity is the pastiche." Conversely, a modernised translation of Shakespeare can wield the advantage, when its effect is compared to the conditions in which

productions in English are received, of retrieving the text into a position of proximity *vis-à-vis* today's audiences, instituting a "vital bond" which no longer proves possible when the original (source) text is presented to a contemporary audience. Déprats's critical consideration of the modernising option, though, is also alert to the losses involved in eliding the historical marks of the text or features of its cultural scope of reference, as well as to the overall rhetorical impoverishment effected by many modern translations. Ultimately, there is no escaping the historicity of the text(s), including that which situates and dates any one translation, the translation of that moment and circumstance, in all its contingency and ephemerality.

The greater favour which the modernising alternative has enjoyed in recent decades has also justified a spate of adaptations of several kinds. Beginning with this realisation, Ton Hoenselaars demonstrates in his contribution that the practice of "liberal" adaptation of Shakespeare (duly supported by theoretical developments within Translation studies) can indeed claim a precedent as remote as the earliest instances of the reception and processing of Elizabethan dramatists within other languages and cultures – and more precisely in the Low Countries, which performed a "textual transit function" as the historical gateway of Shakespeare into continental Europe. As Hoenselaars shows, a more congenial cultural moment has retrieved early versions of Shakespeare from the oblivion and/or contempt they had been plunged into from at least the eighteenth century, and subjected them to a historically conscious rereading that articulates them with specific Dutch textual traditions. Thus, the preference for free adaptations, with the attitude of *aggiornamento* that it entails – and this can include refashioning an offshoot of *Titus Andronicus* through a twentieth-century American narrative – does not preclude an interest in the historicity of these texts. As if to signal that it can indeed enhance one's historical alertness, also in terms of subject matter, that trend has been accompanied by an increased attraction to the history plays, often made to refract a range of political topicalities. These tendencies also encompass an iconoclastic pose *vis-à-vis* Shakespeare, a pose

which, as Hoenselaars suggests, is the only form of sustaining and demonstrating admiration for Shakespeare if and when one feels that bardolatry has ceased to command intellectual respect.

Significantly as to the cogency of this argument on the historical and cultural sources of the trends discussed by Hoenselaars, the other contribution to this volume which takes Shakespeare in the Low Countries for its object comes to stress, in the latter stage of its argument, how in recent years the translation/adaptation distinction has (again) become diluted in a context marked by a number of “rather daring experiments.” With characteristic rigour, Dirk Delabastita refrains from bluntly referring to a “‘trend’ or ‘movement’”; but he admits that the features, the number, and the international currency of rewritings of Shakespeare that prove refractory to some of the defining characteristics of mainstream Shakespeare translation in the past century make it possible to consider the emergence of “an alternative paradigm for the cross-language representation of Shakespeare.” This, “for want of a better term,” he proposes as “the post-modern model of Shakespeare translation.”

Besides such trademark features as a playful use of language, of the texts – historical ballast, and of heterogeneous styles and registers, at the socio-institutional level “this alternative paradigm” has more often than not evinced a liking for “directorial translations,” as Ton Hoenselaars points out, increasingly preferred (for stage productions) to “professional” translations. But it is not as if the conflation of director and translator in the same entity can, by itself, be put forward as a new development: that is rather a pattern which is strongly in place before and beyond the “postmodern model.” Maik Hamburger’s well-tried approach to Shakespeare translation, buttressed by a long theatrical experience, rests on the assumption that an effective translation of drama will largely depend on the translator’s ability to take on a homologous perspective to that of a director. A fundamental condition for that perspective to be appropriated will be the capacity to identify and render “the sum of codes for physical action contained in dramatic lines” (a formula which



spells out the Brechtian notion of *Gestus*). This notion that the translator of drama will have to anticipate the staging of the text, and so to be able to translate the text but also the latent elements which enable and propitiate that staging, is particularised by Hamburger with reference to the necessary perception of how crucial such temporal elements as rhythm and duration can be for the spatial enactment that the staging of the text will bring. But an alertness to such aspects of the text also makes clear that the predominantly stage-bound perspective that Hamburger takes on and endorses in no way detracts from a highly demanding and scrupulous attitude to such traditional areas of scholarly textual competence as phonetics, prosody, and semantics: Hamburger carefully teases out the implications of the alternatives the translator may be faced with when tackling some specific passages of Shakespearean drama, and he does so in a way which combines the qualities of the rigorous scholar with those of the experienced theatre professional. His priorities, though, are clear in his closing axiomatic statement: “It is easier for the theatre to get over an occasional translator’s misinterpretation than to stage a uniformly flaccid play-text.”

If in describing the conditions he envisages and has experienced in the field of drama translation Maik Hamburger juxtaposes the stance of the translator and that of the director, José Roberto O’Shea combines that identification with the elision of the distinction between original and translation, starting as he does “from the premise that translating and staging translations of dramatic literature is an activity akin to writing and staging original drama.” This claim is reconciled with the acknowledgement of an ineluctable dependence on a prior text by defining translation “as a creative hermeneutic *process*” (a concept which indeed applies, from the same theoretical standpoint, to any act of reading). As with other contributors to the volume, O’Shea combines a keen theoretical awareness – which in his case calls upon theatre studies (Patrice Pavis, in particular) and on some of Susan Bassnett’s work on drama translation – with the consequences of his experience of translating a few of Shakespeare’s plays into Brazilian

Portuguese. His emphasis on “process” is fittingly complemented by Pavis’s scheme for encompassing within one single nexus (though analysed into several “concretisations”) the series of trans-semiotic rewritings and (re)readings undergone by the dramatic text from the original script through translation, dramaturgy, performance, to the experience of reception in the theatre. O’Shea acknowledges himself, as a translator, as working strictly at the first level of the text’s reconfiguration, but in full awareness of the requirements the text will have to face at the ulterior levels of its course into full theatrical realisation. This includes being alert to the reception to be found by texts traditionally hailed (however misleadingly) as high-culture objects as they are rendered into Brazilian Portuguese, the language of a vibrant culture both with a sophisticated intellectual life and a strong popular, mass element. The latter is supported (among other structures) by a powerful television industry – a powerful disseminator of idioms and references which can both enter a productive relationship with Shakespeare’s text and pose new challenges to its translator.

A strong awareness of what it means to write/translate for the stage also characterises the contribution of Maria João da Rocha Afonso. She shares with O’Shea the target language, though in her case it is European rather than Brazilian Portuguese, and this has obvious consequences for the specific cultural conformations the translator is writing for. Indeed, Rocha Afonso is all too aware of the pragmatic and rhetorical aspects of her work, and if this lends her essay a concern with the various stages and mediations entailed by the process (“from words to action”) which adds up, in her words, to “the dramaturgical act,” it also contributes to a fundamental difference in approach: whereas O’Shea grounds his points on a keenly developed theoretical argument, Rocha Afonso bases her remarks, emphatically, on her experience as a translator commissioned to write versions for specific stage productions of several of Shakespeare’s plays. Hence her insistence that academic translation and translation for the stage are different tasks, as well as the benign provocation of her self-description as “an employee of the director.” The particulari-

ties of close collaboration with a company show in her remarks on the intervention of actors in the translator's work to suit their particularities of diction or of speech rhythms (something, as she rather wistfully points out, that would be deemed unacceptable if attempted with "original" dramatic work). This sense of negotiation also pervades her description of the translator's liminal position when mediating the hypercanonical playwright to an audience in which that hypercanonicity has already produced certain definite expectations. The mediations she finds inevitable are also, therefore, of an intercultural and intertemporal nature: her norm is very close to domestication, in the attempt to retrieve Shakespeare from some of his remoteness for the sake of contemporary audiences. This requires from the translator a particular attention to a range of prosodic, phonetic, referential, and onomastic aspects, which she duly instances, from her versions of *Richard II*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear* and *Love's Labour's Lost*.

If Rocha Afonso's essay is centred on an empirically derived sense of the inevitability of compromise and negotiation, Maria João Pires's contribution to the volume takes the form of a theoretically informed reflection on both the ambition and the ineluctable sense of insufficiency which characterise the translator's endeavour. Complementing those essays in the volume which relate more empirically to specific challenges faced by the translator, her reflection departs as well from the experience of translating (in her case, *Much Ado about Nothing*); but she opts rather to consider it at the more generic and conceptual level which attends to the tensions between the original and the derivative, as much as between silence and utterance. Indeed, her view is that specific, textually located challenges such as those posed by prosody, or by the urge to search for equivalents at the level of phrase, line or sentence, cannot by themselves account for the broader complexities of translation. These she identifies rather in the textual approximations which make for a view of translation as re(in)statement, as erasure followed by a reinscription – a reinscription which cannot, however, efface from the conscience of the translator the ghostly

presence of the text's in-between states and in-between spaces. Her perspective on this process also includes a literary-historical dimension: the spaces within which and in relation to which the process of translation is envisaged are also those of the traditions of writing proper both to the source and the target languages and cultures.

Several essays collected in this volume consider in greater detail the problems raised by one or more translations of a particular play, articulating them with a theoretical frame of reference, with practical experience in translating Shakespeare, and/or with aspects of the literary and cultural history of the target context. Such is the case of most of the Portuguese contributions to the volume, the majority of which originate in the research-cum-translation project which hosted the December 2000 Oporto Symposium (after which the present volume is titled). But this is also a feature of the Spanish case study offered by Isabel Verdaguer, who charts the founding moments of Shakespeare translation into Spanish, dealing with the circumstances under which *Hamlet* found its way into eighteenth-century Spain. Her analysis of "the interpretation and translation of an English Renaissance play by a neoclassical Spanish playwright from the perspective of the beginning of the twenty-first century" purposefully interrelates (in tune with her theoretical standpoint) a linguistic and a cultural alertness. Leandro Fernández de Moratín's version of *Hamlet* is considered in the context of broader tendencies in the history of the translation of Shakespeare into Spanish, between source- and target-text-oriented versions. Verdaguer's reading is aimed at the reception of the translation within "the framework of the literary system of the receiving culture" – historicising one's awareness of both the conditions under which Moratín produces his translation, and of those under which it is read today. The translator's circumstances, though, are not accorded an unlimited deterministic value, since Verdaguer highlights some of those aspects of his tastes and personal literary inclinations as factors that interact (and sometimes mitigate) the prevailing neoclassical values of his context(s). Indeed, she demonstrates that Moratín's options as a translator of *Hamlet* are made in

despite of his own objections to Shakespeare's breach of decorum, objections he voiced in paratexts (prologue, Shakespeare's biography, notes) to his translation. She also remarks on the apparent absence of contemporary expectations that a version like Moratín's might be staged. The two-sided characteristic of Moratín's personality as a neo-classical writer and as a translator of Shakespeare are articulated with his admiration for a writer whose complex portrayals of humankind retain a persistent appeal.

If *Hamlet* was the first of Shakespeare's plays to find its way into Spain and the Spanish language, it also remains the piece in the canon which was most often translated into Portuguese. António Feijó is the author of one of the latest Portuguese versions of *Hamlet*, made both for the page and for the stage (for a particular production), and his disquisition of some of the specific problems to be faced by the play's translator very openly draws on his specific confrontation with the text. His slightly tongue-in-cheek description of his practical approach to translation as ruled by "two or three simple guidelines" supposedly "shorn of the dignity of theoretical principles" in fact belies its ostensible simplicity by highlighting the ballast of implications which a few "elementary" attitudes on the part of a translator can carry: his ultimate dismissal of the effectiveness of a theory for tackling the perplexities of translation is, of course, highly conscious of its own theoretical implications. Even if in an apparently offhand way, Feijó raises such points as the forms taken by translatability across variously defined language borders, and the homologies which it enables the translator (not) to derive; the validity of a grammar-based approach, not just for the definition of a translator's methodology but, rather more broadly, as a hermeneutic and pedagogic tool; the entwined genealogy of translation and hermeneutics; or the challenges posed by prosody. Approached and signalled rather than pondered at length in his text, these are, intellectually and conceptually, some of his guiding concerns when reviewing what are in fact a few of *Hamlet's* more persistent cruxes, for reader and for translator alike.

The unfeasibility of subsuming all of the challenges empirically

faced by the translator in any one theoretical account of translation somehow finds a plea in Feijó's concluding argument, and it might be even more forcefully subscribed by Manuel Gomes da Torre in his essay on translating *Measure for Measure* into Portuguese. Gomes da Torre puts his considerable experience as a translator and a teacher of translators to use in tackling one of the most persistent problems posed by any translation, in particular of drama: proper names. This experience buttresses the regret, voiced in the initial stages of the paper, for the limited practical consequence of most theoretical developments within translation studies. After reviewing briefly some contributions to the study of proper names in translation, Gomes da Torre proceeds to approach that issue with specific reference to *Measure for Measure*, beginning with Portuguese versions of the play's title. Then the various possibilities which can be derived from the theoretical references he previously invoked are brought to bear on the management of the semantic implications of the characters' names, as well as on the construction of the play's space as "domestic" or foreign. Above all, Gomes da Torre focuses on the reasons for translating or not into a Romance language like Portuguese the names of characters in *Measure for Measure*, with its ostensibly Viennese setting and its mixture of Italianate and loaded, humourous English proper names. From the implications of this mixture, from the theoretical framework within which the issue is considered, from the role played by some of those names in the broader signification and in the dramatic structure of the play, and from consideration of the choices made by previous translators, he derives the conclusion that at least some of the names will have to be translated – after all, the foreign and the native coexist in Shakespeare's play. A detailed account is given of the rationale for his own options as a translator of *Measure for Measure*, particular attention being paid to the humourous names.

If Gomes da Torre's is one of the more linguistically attuned readings in the volume, Fátima Vieira's brief but trenchant study brings some of the interests one has come to associate with cultural

studies to shine on the slippery topic of the “gender of spirits,” or rather on the elusive matter of Ariel’s gendercasting. She departs from an overview of representations of Ariel through *The Tempest*’s stage history, carried out from the perspective of the translator who is faced with fundamental differences in the construction of the spirit – differences that are both diachronic and synchronic, and that straddle linguistic and cultural borders. The issue of gendercasting, on which her study is centred, takes on particular interest in a gender-marked language like Portuguese: if in English the issue of Ariel’s gender only requires a decision to be made when the play is staged (and, even then, the director may opt to ignore or evade the issue), in a language like Portuguese that decision has to be made by the translator him/herself, “working with a linguistic system which implies subject-verb agreement with regard to gender.” Having carefully scanned the text of *The Tempest* and having come upon one single gender indication for Ariel, Vieira opted, in her version, for construing the character as male – even if experiencing the malaise of having to superimpose a gender determination on an aspect of Shakespeare’s text that was felt throughout the history of its reception to be undecided. This somehow confirms her ultimate sense of limitation and contingency as inevitable elements of the translator’s relation to his/her craft, even when that is mitigated by the sense of achievement afforded by having produced a version of a highly demanding text.

Gender issues and their relevance for translating Shakespeare emerge in more than one contribution. Indeed, if Fátima Vieira broaches an instance of gender undecidability, Rui Carvalho Homem highlights the case of a Shakespearean character which assimilates and crucially reinforces a long-standing topos of hyper-femininity, which in the case of Cleopatra also means the woman and the Oriental as other – the object of a critical discourse which has characteristically veered between fascination and opprobrium. The persistence of a sense of challenge felt to be posed by an assertive femininity, which is at the root of such discourse, is confirmed in an overview of

available Portuguese translations of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Any reading of such translations should also integrate, however, some knowledge of the specific conditions under which the Shakespearean construction of Cleopatra's otherness – as woman, as female ruler, in particular as “gipsy” – has been and can be relocated in a Portuguese context today. Besides the sociological awareness of the stereotyping which can condition both the construction and the reception of Cleopatra's gipsiness in any Portuguese version of the play, the issue of Cleopatra as “gipsy” carries a number of linguistic (more specifically, lexical and semantic) implications, which are also briefly approached. Analyses of previous translations and consideration of the options open to the present-day translator show the strain of rewriting a construct whose capacity to fascinate should not occlude the perplexities surrounding its constitutive ethical and political values – and of rewriting it in a way that will not prove untrue to the historical ballast of its production and of its reception.

The strong intercultural and interlinguistic awareness required of the translator of Shakespeare is, to conclude, instanced in a fine case study included in João de Almeida Flor's contribution to the collection. Almeida Flor, who has for years researched diverse aspects of Shakespeare's reception in Portugal, here pays tribute to one of the founding figures of Shakespeare studies in Portugal (also, coincidentally, a founder of the first Faculty of Letters of Oporto, closed down in 1931 by the Salazar regime because of its democratic allegiances). As Almeida Flor demonstrates, Luis Cardim's work proved decisive, well into the middle decades of the twentieth century, to the consolidation of an interest in Shakespeare in Portugal. This was accomplished by means of Cardim's broad range of activities – as lecturer, literary critic, and translator – gauged both for learned and popular audiences. Prior to shedding light on Cardim's contributions, though, Almeida Flor underlines the lateness of a Portuguese interest in Shakespeare, which only towards the end of the nineteenth century would be determined by a concern with direct knowledge of the sources (as was, indeed, the case in several other European coun-



tries). He further provides an overview of the evolution of Shakespeare studies in Portugal through the last stage of the monarchy and the early decades of the Republic (from 1910), productively relating the world of letters to political developments for which the issue of relations with Britain (and, indirectly, with English culture and literature) was anything but irrelevant.

The role played by Luis Cardim is considered in the context of movements for national regeneration defined in the face of an ineluctable sense of decline: promoting the translation and publication of great authors in world history was one of the projects devised in this context. Finally, Almeida Flor concentrates on Cardim's translation of *Julius Caesar*, focusing both on the translator's scholarly work around that translation, and on the contexts and conditions (those proper to a dictatorship) which may have governed his choice of that specific play.

This chapter in literary and institutional history instances once again the breadth of interests represented in this collection. Acknowledging rather than blindly subscribing to the all-embracing designs of Translation studies *vis-à-vis* other disciplines; registering and instancing the variety of standpoints which in recent decades have come to enrich and diversify the study of the most canonical of authors; and representing several different contexts in which Shakespeare's work has been received and translated, the present volume hopes to constitute a persuasive bid for the recognition that Shakespeare-in-translation can indeed be, at the present moment, one of the most productive and flexible tropes for the dynamic and relational nature of all reading and of all writing.

## **Part One**

### **Old and New World Shakespeares**

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# Translating Shakespeare

## A Brief Survey of some Problematic Areas

Alessandro Serpieri

Translating Shakespeare, as all who have attempted to do it know very well, is a very difficult task. It involves at least the following capacities: (a) an excellent knowledge of the historical period and of the theatre which staged that world and its contradictions; (b) a deep acquaintance with the works of the entire canon in order to assess, as far as possible, the meanings Shakespeare attached to words and phrases; (c) an adequate grounding in textual criticism in order to cope with both variant readings transmitted by the early texts and with the frequent cruces and neologisms whose significance is still debated; and (d) a theoretical competence in the peculiarities of dramatic discourse in order to render the virtual theatricality of speeches which have to be delivered and *move* on stage.

Shakespeare's language is extremely dense and turbulent, as it portrayed, interpreted, and at the same time transformed a world which was questioning its historical heritage and opening to new cultural, social, and political modes. Everything was in movement in a dynamic way typical of the Baroque period with all its close associations with illusion. Language itself underwent a sort of radical shake-up, which Shakespeare's inventiveness took to its extreme, producing hybrid registers and styles: the result is, on the one hand, a flurry of new words, new compounds, syntax that is pushed beyond the limits of what was conventional or generally accepted; on the other hand, we find a ten-

dency to parody and dramatise not just stories and actions but also the actual structures and combinations of language. As many critics have noted, Shakespeare has an extraordinary ability to activate the various different senses of almost every word and have them work together or else set one against the other; the result being a *dramatic concert of meanings* that sometimes becomes difficult to follow, especially when a number of contrasting semantic perspectives are thus opened up and when the wider discourse already displays an interplay of various strains of meaning.

Shakespearean theatre is deeply pervaded by anamorphic foreshortenings of any given monological representation of reality, filled as it is with contrasting pictures of the world and with imaginary disruptions of rationality and of long-established symbolism. Relativism and ontological deceit come to coincide: any perspective is justified, but no one is authorized, since no warranty of truth can be granted to any one. However it is looked at, the picture of the world is liable to be reshaped from another angle. As a mirror of a relativized world, his theatre becomes the elected place to show such an indefinite perspective play in which time, space, story, and characters are continually involved and transformed.

What a task for the translator! However hard he tries, he is bound to lose. Still, he *does* cooperate to give new life to the plays, introducing them into a new language and into a new world, and he can also occasionally contribute new readings to the original texts. In fact, while interpreting, annotating, and rewriting Shakespeare, the foreign critic-translator enjoys a very peculiar vantage point. To him Shakespeare's texts present a distance which is only partially perceived by a native speaker, whose linguistic heritage still derives from those early modern English writings, and who is therefore at least partly guided by an automatic understanding of that language. A foreigner, instead, was not born with the feeling of the language in his blood, and is forced to question every single semantic trait of the texts, and this

may sometimes be rewarding. In fact, even at the level of lexicon, any translator cannot but work through semic analyses of words (and of sequences of words) in order to discover almost equivalent signs in his own language. Trying to unravel such a complex texture, the foreign critic-translator may make some discovery or at least raise some doubts about accepted interpretations, particularly when he has to cope with cruces, neologisms, and hapax legomena.

An amazing number of neologisms are scattered throughout the canon, and they always signal an outburst of expressive energy, the emergence of new “voices” in the semantics of the vocabulary. They are the frontiers of language, the starting points for new adventures of the mind into the realm of experience. One of the greatest difficulties in translating Shakespeare lies, in my opinion, in conciliating the expected with the unexpected, the confirmed meaning, however marvellously expressed it may be, with the generative configuration of a new meaning. Shakespeare’s energy spurts from these layers of language where knowing and inventing dramatically cooperate both in phrases and speeches, and, at the theatrical level, in the interactions of complex minds and attitudes. This energy is not fully endogenous, does not circulate only within the mind of the artist, but is based on cultural and social exchanges, on intertextuality and on the “negotiations” of which Stephen Greenblatt has spoken in *Shakespearean Negotiations*.<sup>1</sup> But in the end the inventive energy of his texts remains his own and as such it must be rendered into a foreign language. And one must be wary of traditional interpretations of complex or obscure passages as well as of widely accepted readings, and of emendations which normalize (starting in some cases from the Folio edition) Shakespeare’s inventions.

To sum up, the translator must deal with the multi-leveled energy of his texts in order to make it sensed in another language and in

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

another age by another public. More specifically, he has to render in the target language the energy of dramatic speech, which is virtual on the page, while showing all its pragmatic significance when combined with the extralinguistic codes on the stage. To schematize it briefly, the energy of the dramatic text can be seen at various levels:

1. It is the energy produced by the complex representation of a rapidly changing world.
2. It is the energy referring to the theatrical *space*: any enunciation is related to the character who is speaking, to other characters, to objects (real or imaginary), to the audience; it is a performance involving facial expressions, gestures, movements, and the like.
3. It is the energy of dramatic *time*, of the “here and now” in which the speech-acts absorb both past and future, pushing forward the “continuous present” of theatre.

I have tried to summarize in a scheme quite a few categories of problems which I have encountered in translating Shakespeare. With this I do not at all presume to offer a theory of Shakespearean translation. What I submit to your attention here is just an attempt to sketch an outline of my own poetics of translation.

## Preliminaries

According to Roman Jakobson’s theory on the many aspects of translation, we may say that dramatic translation must be based upon a preliminary endolinguiistic translation, or checking of meaning, and will result in an interlinguistic translation which takes into account the intersemiotic translatability encoded in the original text. In brief, the endolinguiistic translation “consists in the interpretation of the

linguistic signs through other signs of the same language.”<sup>2</sup> This translation, which is carried out by the native speakers when they look words up in their dictionary, inevitably engages also the foreign translator who has to ascertain meanings in the history of the language as well as in the history of the literary language of the epoch in which a text was produced. The interlinguistic translation is of course what is normally meant by translation, defined as “the interpretation of linguistic signs through another language” (233). Finally, the inter-semiotic translation “consists in the interpretation of linguistic signs through non linguistic systems” (233). Since any play is a particular linguistic text conceived for the stage where characters speak and, at the same time, act according to non-linguistic codes (mimic, gestic, proxemic, etc.) which are encoded explicitly in stage directions and implicitly in the language itself, the translator of drama must take into account all three kinds of translation.

Apart from philological discoveries which may change it, the original text is destined to remain stable, permanent, in time, while the translated text will always be transitory, provisional and open to an indefinite rewording.

### **1. Problematic areas: the philological, the linguistic, the semiotic**

Different types of problems depending on the different areas and levels:

(a) there will be “discrete” choices (binary, ternary) in the philological area and at the lexical level of the linguistic area. By discrete choices I mean local choices: in the field of philology, which of two or three readings (authorial, editorial) one is going to choose; in the field of semantics and semiotics, which option out of two or three one is going to adopt.

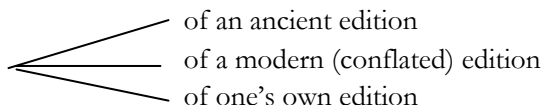
<sup>2</sup> “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” in *On Translation*, edited by R. A. Brower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 232-39 (p. 233).



(b) there will be continuous or “chromatic” choices at the rhythmic, metric, syntactic, stylistic and rhetorical levels of the linguistic area. At these levels the choice of a translator involves strategies which affect the whole text or parts of a text.

## 2. The philological area

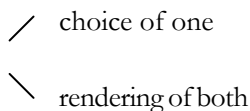
### 2.1. *Preliminary choice*



In my experience, consulting the quartos, when extant, the Folio, and various modern editions, I have felt obliged more often than not to construct a virtual edition of my own, depending on the interpretation I considered the best for my overall reading of a play.

### 2.2. *Translation choices*

#### 2.2.a *Two authoritative readings in ancient editions*



An example of this situation in which two authoritative readings in ancient editions exist, is *Hamlet*, 1.2. Here, Q1 and Q2 read: HAMLET “O that this too too *sullied* flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew...” F reads: “O that this too too *solid* flesh would melt...”

Q1 and Q2's *sallied* is normally interpreted as a phonemic variant for *sullied*, and is homophonous with F's *solid*. In this case I opted for a translation of both readings on the assumption that both meanings sounded together in the same word: “Oh se questa *lurida solida* carne potesse sciogliersi....”

In another case referring to an exchange of speeches earlier in the same scene, this choice seemed impossible to me and I opted for the Folio reading: *Hamlet*, 1.2.66-67 – Folio reading: KING “How is it

that the clouds still hang on you?" HAMLET "Not so, my lord, I am too much *in the sun*." Q2 reading: *in the sonne*.

Once again we have a pun or paronomasia in which two meanings come together, but it seems to be practically impossible for a translator to render both. My translation: RE *Com'è che ancora su di te incombono le nuvole?* AMLETO *Non così, mio signore, sono fin troppo sotto il sole.*<sup>3</sup>

2.2.b *Two readings (one ancient, one editorial)* / choice of the ancient one  
 \ choice of the emendation

2.2.b1 *Necessary emendations and possible normalizations*

2.2.c *Two attributions of speeches (both ancient)* – choice of one

An example of a situation in which two different attributions of speeches are possible, is the scene in which King Lear dies:

King Lear's death, Act 5, Quarto reading (1608):

LEAR And my poor fool is hanged. No, no life.  
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
 And thou no breath at all? O, thou wilt come no more.  
 Never, never, never. Pray you, undo  
 This button. Thank you, sir. O, O, O, O!  
 EDGAR He faints. [*To Lear*] My lord, my lord!  
 LEAR Break, heart, I prithee break.  
 EDGAR Look up, my lord.  
 KENT Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass. He hates him  
 That would upon the rack of this tough world  
 Stretch him out longer. [*Lear dies*]  
 EDGAR O, he is gone indeed.

<sup>3</sup> *Amleto*, edited and translated by A. Serpieri (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980; revised edition: Venice: Marsilio, 1997), 1.2.66-67.

KENT The wonder is he hath endured so long.  
He but usurped his life.

King Lear's death, Folio reading (1623):

LEAR And my poor fool is hanged. No, no, no life?  
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more.

Never, never, never, never, never.

[*To Kent*] Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips.

Look there, look there. *He dies*

EDGAR He faints. [*To Lear*] My lord, my lord!

KENT [*to Lear*] Break, heart, I prithee break.

EDGAR [*to Lear*] Look up, my lord.

KENT Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass. He hates him

That would upon the rack of this tough world

Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR He is gone indeed.


KENT The wonder is he hath endured so long.

He but usurped his life.

As Michael Warren has noted, much here depends on the attribution of speeches and consequently on the moment when Lear dies.<sup>4</sup> Many critics and directors would prefer the triple “no” of F rather than the double of Q, and even more the five “never” of F rather than the three of Q, and very likely they would not renounce the lines “Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips. / Look there, look there” which appear in F, but not in Q. Soon after those two lines F makes Lear die, while in Q there is no indication of the moment of his death, which however Wells and Taylor suppose must happen after

<sup>4</sup> Michael Warren, “The Theatricalization of Text: Beckett, Jonson, Shakespeare,” *New Directions in Textual Studies*, edited by D. Oliphant and R. Bradford (Austin, TX: The University of Texas, 1990), 39-59.

“Stretch him out longer.”<sup>5</sup> Obviously the dramatic effect changes depending on when Lear dies. Some evidence of different theatrical solutions at this point may be gathered by the different attribution of the speech “Break, heart, I prithee break,” which Q gives to Lear and F to Kent. This change of attribution is strictly related to the original stage direction in F: He dies. Being dead, Lear cannot pronounce those words. But the point is that we cannot ascertain whether that stage direction was inserted by Shakespeare himself or by the editors of the Folio. Who knows in how many ways and moments Lear died on the Jacobean stage in the course of the many productions of the play during Shakespeare’s lifetime and after his death! Presumably the reading of Q was closer to original manuscript: it sounds dramatically more enthralling, even though linguistically less rich. In this version Lear cries at the moment of invoking death and Kent invites Edgar to let him pass: “Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass.” What should a translator do with these various readings? If his/her translation is meant for a stage production, he/she will inevitably negotiate his/her rendering with the director.

2.2.c1 <i>Two attributions of speeches</i> <i>(one ancient, one editorial)</i>	 <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">choice of the ancient attribution</div> <div>choice of the editorial one</div> </div>
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The different attribution of a speech may change radically the meaning of a scene. Let’s take for instance *Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.47-53.<sup>6</sup> Aaron has been taken prisoner together with the child he has had by Tamora. Lucius wants them both hanged immediately: “A halter,

<sup>5</sup> *The History of King Lear – The Quarto Text, The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 941, scene 24:310.

<sup>6</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, edited by J. C. Maxwell (London: Methuen, 1968). My edition: *Tito Andronico*, translated by A. Serpieri (Milan: Garzanti, 1989).

soldiers, hang him on this tree, / And by his side his fruit of bastardy.” Aaron asks him not to touch his son: “Touch not the boy, he is of royal hand.” Lucio does not follow him: “Too like the sire for ever being good. / First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl – / A sight to vex the father’s soul withal.” At this point, in the ancient editions, Aaron intervenes in a desperate attempt to save his son: “Get me a ladder. Lucius, save the child.” Pope and Capell attributed “Get me a ladder” to Lucius, leaving to Aaron “Lucius, save the child”; and Capell added a stage direction which supported the emendation: “A ladder brought, which Aaron is made to ascend.” The emendation radically changes the action: in the ancient editions, Aaron takes the lead; in almost all the modern editions the emendation is accepted, Aaron being passively obliged to climb the ladder to the gallows. It seems to me that the ancient reading makes more sense: in order to save his child, Aaron asks for a ladder and climbs it spontaneously to the gallows where he will recite his gospel of horrors. Here we can see how the translator’s choice may affect the action itself. My translation followed the ancient reading.

#### 2.2.d *Two ancient authoritative punctuations* — choice of one

An example of two different instances of ancient punctuations, which are both authoritative, may be found in *Hamlet*, 2.2.303-307.

*Q2 reading*: “What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god!”

*F reading*: “What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in forme and moving how express and admirable! in Action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!”

As can easily be seen, the meaning varies considerably from one type of punctuation to another, and the translator must make his/her choice. I opted for the Q2 reading:

Che opera d'arte è l'uomo, quanto nobile nella sua ragione, quanto infinito nelle sue facoltà, nella forma e nel movimento, quanto appropriato e ammirevole nell'azione, quanto simile a un angelo nell'intendimento, quanto simile a un dio!<sup>7</sup>

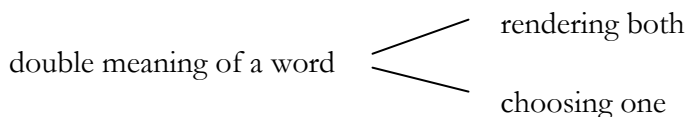
### 3. The linguistic and semiotic areas

#### 3.1. The "discrete" choices

##### 3.1.1. Of the lexical order

The semic structure of words being rarely reproducible into another language, interlinguistic synonymy is the target, and often the mirage, not the object of the translator:

##### 3.1.1a Denotation and connotation



An example may be found in *Hamlet*, 2.2.148-51:

POLONIUS [...] Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, *by this declension*,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves.

Here Polonius is telling the king and queen the cause he assumes to have discovered of Hamlet's madness: at his command, Ophelia has

<sup>7</sup> *Amleto*, translated by A. Serpieri, 2.2.303-307.

rejected the prince, and he has fallen gradually into madness. Contextually, the phrase *by this declension* seems to me to have two meanings: one explicit, declining in this way, and one implicit, an ironic authorial definition of the rhetoric of Polonius' discourse, which amounts to a grammatical-rhetorical "declension" of information. Accordingly, I have translated the passage as follows:

si è lasciato andare alla tristezza, poi al digiuno,  
quindi all'insonnia, quindi alla debolezza,  
quindi al vaneggiamento, e, *così declinando*,  
alla pazzia in cui ora delira e che noi tutti compiangiamo.

### 3.1.1b *Neologisms and hapax legomena*

My example comes from *Macbeth*, 1.7.1-7:<sup>8</sup>

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly: if th'assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success; that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,  
But here upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come.

The main opposition in this tragedy, where the energy of invention appears at its full and, consequently, a large number of neologisms occur, seems to be that between *doing* and *being*: *doing*, which implies the destruction of the symbolic order represented by the sacred king, is associated with darkness, night, hand, touch; *being* is linked with light, day, eye, sight. Macbeth's soliloquy at the beginning of this scene, where his will vacillates and he finally decides not to act (except that soon afterwards his wife convinces him to do the deed),

<sup>8</sup> Edition used: *Macbeth*, edited by Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1963).

expresses with an extraordinary intensity the set-back that lies at the basis of the whole play, the impossibility for an action which violates the Symbolic World to reach the state of being, of being “safely thus,” which was granted only within the Order that the hero has broken down.<sup>9</sup> The passage is rich with neologisms (in italics in the quotation), which, as I noted, are far from rare in Shakespeare, as is shown in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, where quite a few words and compounds are registered in the year of the first publication, or of the supposed first performance, of one of his plays. Here the *OED* indicates 1605, presumably the year of the first performance of *Macbeth*, for the verbal phrase *trammel up* (line 3) as well as for the verbal substantives *the be-all* and *the end-all* (line 5). Let us start with the first expression, which in the figurative sense is defined by the *OED* as “To entangle or fasten *up* as in a trammel,” following the two literal meanings, one still extant, “to take (fish or birds) with a trammel-net,” and the other obsolete, “To fasten together (the legs of a horse) with trammels.” It is an hapax in the canon. Onions interprets it as “lit. to entangle in a net; fig. to prevent,” and it is in this figurative sense that the expression has usually been assumed to mean to impede, to preclude, or to prevent the consequences of the proposed murder. This is still the interpretation of Stephen Greenblatt in the *Norton Shakespeare*: “restrain the subsequent sequence of events, as in a trammel, or net.”<sup>10</sup> The presence of a neologistic compound – usually the signal of an imaginative effort – leads us to a further investigation. So we find that *trammel* derives from the Old French *tramail*, which in turn comes from the Latin *tramaculum*, “a long narrow fishing net, set vertically with floats and sinkers” (*OED*). The word started to refer also to catching birds, “a fowling net,” only

<sup>9</sup> “To be thus is nothing / But to be safely thus” (3.1.46-47).

<sup>10</sup> *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt *et al.* (New York: Norton, 1997), 2574. Nicholas Brooke, in the Oxford edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), opens an ambiguous alternative: “1. catch (used of netting fish or birds); 2. fasten together the legs of a horse to prevent it straying” (p. 117).



in 1530. The fact that the verb is here used, for the first time, in combination with the particle *up* seems to point to the original and more usual meaning of fishing, of gathering fish *up*. A meaning that appears to be strengthened by that peculiar and philologically debated metaphorical expression which occurs in line 6: “upon this bank and shoal [*Schoole* in the Folio] of time,” a mental location, either in the river or in the sea of time, in which Macbeth seems to put himself in his reflection on time, or better on the precarious human condition and prospect of action *in* time.<sup>11</sup> The meaning of lines 2-3 may not be then the one most generally accepted, i.e. “if murder might trap, prevent, its consequences,” but rather: “if murder might fish, lift up as in a trammel, its full and ultimate result.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, the word *consequence* is in some cases used by Shakespeare to mean not what is the consequence of some act or fact but what follows as a result of an action. An example is the phrase “Joy be the consequence!”, which Bassanio wishes to himself as the outcome of his choice of the leaden casket in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2.107). An interpretation like this is further reinforced by the phrase following in lines 3-4, where *catch* is a hunting metaphor, possibly suggested by the previous fishing metaphor *trammel up*, and its object is *success* (an explicit positive definition of “result”). If this is convincing, the overall meaning of the passage is different from the traditional interpretation (and from the definition of “trammel up” in *OED*): Macbeth would not hesitate here in fear of the pragmatic consequences of his act, but rather

<sup>11</sup> This complex sea or river metaphor is twice confirmed later in the play: first when, after the murder, Macbeth perceives his bloody hands in the act of plucking out his eyes, doubts that the ocean might wash out that blood, and decides that rather extermination carried out by his hand will “The multitudinous seas incarnadine”; and later when he says to his wife: “I am in blood / Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o’er” (3.4.135-37).

<sup>12</sup> And this is the gloss of only one edition as far as I know: *Macbeth*, edited by John F. Andrews (London: Dent, 1990): “gather up into a net everything that will follow as a result” (p. 36).

would waver because of an ontological doubt on the effectiveness of action in time. Actions may achieve results, but actions breaking down the Order which only can grant stability to results cannot translate *doing* into *being*. Moreover, this reading would better explain the two following neologisms in line 5, which show the impossible target at which Macbeth's action (his "blow") would aim: "the be-all and the end-all," two verbal substantives that *OED* respectively defines as "That which constitutes the all" and "That which ends all," but that, in my opinion, should be literally interpreted as "the state in which being is fully achieved" and "the state which concludes the whole chain of actions wherein the subject is otherwise trapped."<sup>13</sup> This is because the vexation of Macbeth – here, before the action, and then throughout the play as an outcome of the inconsequentiality of his action – is that of not being able to push *doing* to the point of achieving *being*, being king for all his life, past the risk of the indefinite *becoming* (that is *acting*). My translation:


Se fosse fatto, una volta fatto, allora sarebbe bene  
 che fosse fatto in fretta. Se l'assassinio  
 potesse pescare il suo risultato e afferrare,  
 con la sua fine, il successo; se solo questo colpo  
 potesse essere l'essere-tutto e il concludere-tutto, qui,


<sup>13</sup> According to what seems to me a reductive reading (authorized by *OED*) of these neologistic compounds, translators usually simplify their meaning. M. A. Conejero translates them into Spanish as "todo y fin de todo" (as submitted to me in MS by the translator several years ago); Jean-Michel Déprats changes the grammar of the original with the phrase "si ce seul coup / Pouvait tout accomplir et tout finir ici" (*Macbeth, Shakespeare: Tragédies*, edited and translated by J. M. Déprats [Paris: Gallimard, 2002]); the Italian translators render the expression with "il principio e la fine" (*Macbeth*, translated by C. Chiarini [Florence: Sansoni, 1964]; *Macbeth*, translated by A. Lombardo [Milan: Mondadori, 1976]), "tutto e la fine di tutto" (*Macbeth*, translated by C. V. Lodovici [Turin: Einaudi, 1960]; *Macbeth*, translated by N. D'Agostino [Milan: Garzanti, 1989]), "il principio e la fine di tutto" (*Macbeth*, translated by E. Chinol [Milan: Mursia, 1971]), "potesse, mentre è, aver già fine" (*Macbeth*, translated by R. Rutelli [Venice: Marsilio, 1996]). My edition: *Macbeth*, edited and translated by A. Serpieri (Florence: Giunti, 1996).

qui soltanto, su questo sabbioso banco,  
 su questa secca del tempo, scavalcheremmo  
 la vita del mondo a venire.

I may be wrong, but if I am right the whole play acquires a more profound meaning, starting from these neologisms.

### 3.1.1c *Tropes (mainly metaphors)*

Making sure that it is really  a metaphor  
 or a catachresis

If a metaphor  rendering with a metaphor  
 rendering through a periphrasis

### Hidden metaphors

An example may be found in *Macbeth*, 5.5.9-15.

MACBETH: I have almost forgot the taste of fears.  
 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd  
 To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair  
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir,  
 As life were in't. *I have supped full* with horrors:  
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
 Cannot once start me.

In the previous scene, Macbeth had furiously insulted the servant who entered to announce to him that ten thousand soldiers were approaching the castle of Dunsinane. Even before he could pronounce a word, Macbeth had damned him for his white face, for those “linen cheeks of thine” which “are counsellors to fear” (5.3.16-17). On that face, in fact, he sees the mirror of his own fear. In this scene he is

preparing himself for the imminent battle, when a cry of women from within stops him short and Seyton goes to see what has happened. Then he has this penultimate soliloquy, which has not received the attention it deserves, differently from his last soliloquy on the waste of time ("Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow"). In this case too I perceive a neglected overdetermination of sense in an expression ("I have *supped* full with horrors") which does not seem to me to have been satisfactorily analysed. I will start by noting that he qualifies his forgetting fear with a significant *almost*, and uses a gustative metaphor, *the taste*, to transmit this disturbing feeling. Fear receives therefore an oral connotation that goes back to a remote time of childhood which emerges in the lines immediately following. Soon afterwards we find the expression cited above and centred on another gustative metaphor. First of all we must ascertain the "age," so to speak, of the past he is going back to: relatively recent, indeterminate, or remote? The expression "The time has been" (line 10) is normally used by Shakespeare – in the same way as the expression "the time was that," or "when" – to indicate a very distant time, either individual or historical. In 3.4, Macbeth had employed the same expression to evoke the ancient barbarous age which preceded "the gentle weal," the bond of civilisation: "The time has been / That, when the brains were out, the man would die..." (3.4.77-78). We are thus authorized to infer that the time of his life Macbeth is referring to here be very remote: in fact, it appears as a time of imaginary fears, a time in which his "fell of hair / Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir." The *treatise* is a story or, better here, a fairytale. In this connection we should remember the rebuke he receives from Lady Macbeth earlier in the play: "O! these flaws and starts, / (Impostors to true fear), would well become / A woman's story at a winter's fire, / Authorized by her grandam" (3.4.62-65). Soon after this voyage into the past in order to find the roots of his fears and dismiss them, Macbeth adds: "I have *supp'd* full with horrors." Critics usually overlook the semantic density of the gustative metaphor, and link it either to the

“our poisoned chalice” (1.7.11), or to the banquet of 3.4, when the ghost of Banquo had appeared to Macbeth. In my reading, and in the resulting translation choice I have adopted, the metaphor is rather related to the imaginary of early childhood. I was intrigued by the verb *supp’d* and consulted the *OED* very carefully. There I discovered that the verb “to sup,” besides the more usual sense, derived from the Old French *super*, of “to eat one’s supper” or “to dine,” offers an alternative, and now obsolete, sense, derived from the Old English *supan*, i.e. “To take (liquid) into the mouth in small quantities,” “To take a sip or sips” (and see for example Ben Jonson: “Might I of Iove’s nectar *sup*”<sup>14</sup>). The deepest meaning here would then be that of a horror linked to the orality of childhood (an orality to which Lady Macbeth was referring to when she defined the nature of her husband as “too full of the *milk* of human kindness” (1.5.15), and no matter whether that milk mingled with fear). A superb hero in battle, Macbeth presents himself from the very beginning as a man impregnated with fear. According to this reading, having introjected fear, Macbeth tries to exorcise it by means of projection, by acting it out and bringing terror everywhere. In his flight from the horrible through the practice of the horrible, by creating “strange images of death” (as in the mediated perception Duncan had of him), Macbeth has finally become *the* fear, and still is doomed to be haunted by it till the very end. My translation:

Ho quasi dimenticato il sapore delle paure.  
 C’è stato un tempo in cui i miei sensi si sarebbero gelati  
 a udire un grido nella notte, e l’intero scalpò  
 ad un racconto pauroso mi si rizzava e fremeva  
 come se avesse vita. Ho poppato ogni orrore

<sup>14</sup> Ben Jonson, “Song. To Celia,” *The Forrest* IX:7, *Ben Jonson – Vol. VIII, The Poems/The Prose Works*, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 106.

fino ad ingozzarmi, e il terrore, familiare  
 ai miei pensieri omicidi, non può più  
 farmi trasalire.

### 3.1.1d *Lexemes as cultural units*

Let us turn to *Titus Andronicus* for an example of a lexeme as a cultural unit. In that play, the desperate Titus addresses the poor Lavinia disfigured and defaced thus: “Thou *map* of woe, that thus dost talk in signs...” (3.2.12). How should one render the word *map*? Commentators usually normalize the meaning. Maxwell (Arden edition) interprets *map* as “image, embodiment.”<sup>15</sup> Translators too follow this reading, adopting words ranging from image to figure. But I have decided to stick to the original: “Tu mappa di dolore, che così parli per segni.” The word *map* was at that time particularly rich with meanings, being as it was at the centre of various cultural codes: technical-cartographic, mercantile and commercial, adventurous and fantastic. In literary texts it revealed a great imaginative suggestion. A case in point is John Donne’s “The Good-morrow.” But see also Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, where Maria says of the beguiled Malvolio when reading the forged letter: “He does smile his face into more lines than is in the *new map* with the augmentation of the Indies.”<sup>16</sup> In Titus’s speech, *map* is particularly pregnant, since it agrees with the metaphorical exchange between microcosm and macrocosm so recurrent in the whole play, and it perfectly fits besides the verbal function *talk in signs*: defaced Lavinia can only *talk* in signs in order to reveal her story in the same way as contemporary maps *talked in signs* about known and unknown lands.

Another example may be seen in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Portia receives praise from Lorenzo for having conceded her new

<sup>15</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, edited by J. C. Maxwell, 71.

<sup>16</sup> *Twelfth Night*, edited by M. M. Mahood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 3.2.74-76.

lord, Bassanio, to leave Belmont in order to assist his friend Antonio in Venice:

I never did repent for doing good,  
Nor shall not now; for in companions  
That do converse and waste the time together,  
Whose souls do bear an egal yoke of love,  
There must be needs a like proportion  
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit;  
Which makes me think that this Antonio,  
Being the bosom lover of my lord,  
Must needs be like my lord.<sup>17</sup>

In her speech, it seems to me that the third line says more than is usually thought. Commentators take the meaning for granted and gloss only *waste* as meaning *spend*. I think that here we have a celebration of Platonic friendship, as the following lines appear to confirm. The sense hinges on *converse* and *waste the time*. The two ideal friends do not limit themselves, in Portia's perspective, to talking to each other and spending the time. The verb *to converse*, as *OED* reports, took the usual meaning of "to talk with" only in 1615. Before that date it meant "To consort, keep company; to be familiar with; to interchange ideas with." It derives from the Latin *conversari*, and *conversatio*, which in turn meant "frequentation," "having company or communal life," "to be intimate." It is therefore a verb which fits Platonic friendship perfectly and at the same time illuminates the expression which follows – *and waste the time together* – and amounts to much more than spending time: the two friends *waste* the time instead of *being wasted* by it, as it is the common destiny of things and of humans too (see this constant paradigm in the *Sonnets*) unless they are ready to

<sup>17</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, edited by John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1981), 3.4.10-18. My edition: *Il Mercante di Venezia*, edited and translated by A. Serpieri (Milan: Garzanti, 1987).

oppose it through a Neoplatonic conception of the immutability of spirits and of spiritual relationships *in time*: if Time continuously devours, destroys and wastes everything, the divine friendship of spirits avoids such wear by wasting time. Accordingly, I have translated:

Non mi sono mai pentita delle buone azioni,  
né lo farò ora; perché tra compagni  
che in comunione tra loro consumano il tempo,  
e le cui anime portano un eguale giogo d'amore,  
dev'esserci per forza un'eguale proporzione  
di tratti, di maniere e di spirito...

### 3.1.2. *Of the semantic order*

When faced by synonymic clusters, the translator must be very careful in trying to establish and render the original synonymic hierarchy into another linguistic system. Examples here might multiply; I will therefore expand this category in another article.

### 3.1.3. *Of the isotopic order*

- a) Isotopies: spotting and rendering them;
- b) pluri-isotopies: rendering the semantic web or choosing the predominant isotopy;
- c) intersemiotic pluri-isotopies (linguistic and scenic): the necessity of rendering both.

*Hamlet* provides a fitting example of this third category: "Come, sir to draw toward an end with you" (3.4.220). Hamlet is leaving his mother and addresses the counsellor with grim irony: linguistically, the meaning is, "to finish with you," but the phrase at the same time activates, on the theatrical level, the normal acceptation of the verb to draw as to pull, to haul. While saying these words, Hamlet is tugging away the corpse. The dramatic language shows the intersemiotic play.



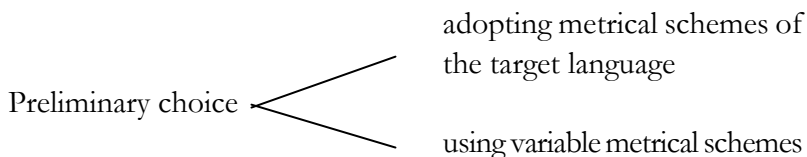
And this is confirmed by the next scene (4.1), when Gertrude answers the question of the king about the movements of Hamlet. Where is he gone? “To draw apart the body he hath kill’d.” I have rendered the two meanings: “Venite, signore, per *tirare fin in fondo* il discorso con voi.”

### 3.1.4. *Of the morphological and of the phonological order*

- a) Phonic and morphological patterns;
- b) puns and quibbles;
- c) malapropisms: the necessity of rendering the play between the word in *praesentia* and that in *absentia*.

### 3.2. *The continuous or “chromatic” choices*

#### 3.2.1. *Rhythm and metre*



#### 3.2.2. *Syntax*

Problem of fidelity to the tactics of argumentation, within the system of references and of deictic orientations, since on the stage speaking means to take an attitude and to act.

#### 3.2.3. *Rhetoric*

- a) How to render the dominant rhetorical figures of a text (paradigms).

- b) How to render the rhetoric of schemes (syntagms).

### 3.2.4. *Style*

- a) Style and styles of the original text.
- b) Style and styles of the translated text: choosing archaic or modernizing solutions.
- c) The problem of hybridization and of new communicative effects.

## 4. Inevitable hybridization:

- a) Losses;
- b) possible compensations.

**Open conclusion.** I have here provided only a few examples of a selection of problems encountered in my work as a translator of Shakespeare. Translation always entails linguistic, cultural and historical hybridization which is essential to the life of cultures, bringing about a dialogue between two different views of the world, two different systems of perceptions, two cultural and historical periods, and finally two existential and linguistic consciousnesses, that of the author and that of the translator as a new author. But the translator's choice must first of all render a language which, however rich and complex on the literary level, was conceived for the body and voice of actors-characters performing their action-life on the stage.

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# **The Translatability of Shakespearean Texts into an Unrelated Language/Culture**

Alexander Shurbanov

My topic was prompted by the paper of a colleague from the University of Alicante presented at a recent conference.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, he looked into the way Shakespearean malapropisms are rendered in Spanish translation. And, of course, he had to turn to Dogberry, an inexhaustible source of such bloopers. One of his quotations was “Comparisons are odorous” as a substitute for the familiar saying “Comparisons are odious,” which this semi-literate character can only reproduce in a typically garbled fashion. The Spanish translators of *Much Ado about Nothing* appear to have hesitated between the words “odorosas,” “olorosas,” and “ociosas” as corruptions of the correct term in the parallel proverb “Las comparaciones son odiosas,” apparently no less familiar in their own language.<sup>2</sup>

As a translator and a student of translation from English into Bulgarian I could not help being envious of my Spanish counterparts. To the best of my knowledge, there is no similar expression in my

<sup>1</sup> John L. Sanderson, “The Translation of Malapropisms and Other Lexical Lapses in Shakespearean Comedy: Dogberry and His Watchmen in *Much Ado about Nothing*,” paper offered at the international conference “Four Centuries of Shakespeare in Europe,” University of Murcia, 18-20 November 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Sanderson discusses translations of the play made by Jaime Clark (1871), Luis Marin Astrana (1929), J. M. Valverde (1967), Roberto R. Varela (1946, 1970), and Jaime Navarra Farré.

own language and the solution of the problem is, therefore, far less simple. A recent translation of the play by Valeri Petrov – rightly commended for its faithfulness to the minutiae of the original’s stylistic features<sup>3</sup> – could do no better than approximate the word for “comparisons” (“sравneniya”) by a similarly sounding coinage meaning “ignominies” (“sramleniya”) and replacing the proverb with an indignant exclamation: “Leave aside those ignominies.”<sup>4</sup> Much of the humourous effect derived from the decomposition of a set phrase is, naturally and unfortunately, lost in this transformation, but the loss seems to be inescapable.

This brings me to my central argument. There is a fairly large and amply articulate group of modern European nations, the descendants of one-time Christendom (now more often calling themselves EU), who share a good deal of common history and common culture and whose languages, however different, are intimately related, thanks to the ultimate derivation of much of their stock from Latin and its rich literary uses in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Bulgaria, like many other outsiders, has not had the historical good fortune of belonging to this community. Although it was among the early converts to Christianity and has always aspired to be part and parcel of European civilisation, its course through the ages has been markedly different. From the time of its official baptism in the ninth century it was drawn into the Byzantine sphere and all founts of its acculturation were Greek rather than Latin. This and the ensuing prolonged engulfment in the Ottoman Empire from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth century shaped a course of development very different from that of the West. Entire periods of social, political and cultural

<sup>3</sup> The complete dramatic works of Shakespeare translated by Valeri Petrov, an eminent writer, were published by the Narodna kultura publishers in seven volumes during 1970-81.

<sup>4</sup> All Bulgarian examples have been transliterated from the Cyrillic into the Latin alphabet.

history, such as the Age of Chivalry, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism, remained closed to it and had to be absorbed hurriedly during its belated national revival towards the end of the foreign occupation.

As any kind of translation is an act of transferring information across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the degree of genealogical and contactual relatedness between the two languages and cultures it attempts to bridge is important to take into account. Bulgaria is, obviously, not an exception. As a matter of fact, it can be seen to be positioned close enough to Shakespeare's England on a scale of countries and regions manifesting an ever increasing distance from it. This relative proximity makes of it an interesting case to examine, because the difference stands out more sharply against the background of similarity, and adequate translation becomes a tantalising possibility that keeps eluding us.

The first challenge that a Bulgarian translator of Shakespearean texts has to face is his/her language's limited store of words denoting the accoutrements of knights, the fine distinctions between different kinds of weapons, and the like. Thus, one generic word, "shpaga" (from the Italian "spaga") has to make do for at least four terms used in *Hamlet*: "rapier," "poniard," "sword," and "foil." Words for Turkish sabres, scimitars and similar local weapons are plentiful but they suggest a cultural set-up very different from that of Western Europe and, with time, have largely turned into historical terms, so translators, understandably, try to eschew them.

Some of the other classes of lexical items in this semantic group are not inexistent in Bulgarian, but they are in so limited a circulation that few people in the audience would recognise them if they heard them uttered from the stage. Such is, for instance, "zabralo," an old Slavic word for "visor." Valeri Petrov has preferred to coin a new term for this part of the knight's headgear, "litsebran" (a compound formation whose literal meaning is "face-guard"). This seems to be a felicitous choice, for the second element standing for "guard" is

recognisable as the component of a series of such words, somewhat exclusively literary and antiquated yet meaningful, exactly right for the purpose.

The “stocks” in *King Lear* must also be mentioned in the discussion of this translation. While the local historical experience did not by-pass the said instrument of punishment, the traditional word for it, “tumruk,” has again been out of use for such a long time that it can now only puzzle the audience. What is more, being of Turkish origin, it carries with it – like most linguistic vestiges of the Ottoman period – a special regional atmosphere that is felt as foreign to the British setting of the play. So a culturally sensitive translator opts for a less conventional solution of the problem. In Petrov’s rendition we come across a word sounding like “stocks” – “stegi” – and originally used to refer to the carpenter’s vice. The advantage of this option is that, even if not every spectator will be familiar with the term, most will not have much difficulty in guessing its meaning, for it is quite obviously related to a verb meaning “grip” or “clasp.”

The rule to be drawn from these examples seems to be that translators should be mindful of the horizon of linguistic and cultural expectations of their current audience rather than adhering to automatic dictionary “equivalents.” The cultivation of a certain patina signalling the temporal distance of the story through slightly antiquated words and turns of phrase is nonetheless desirable. The desired effect is usually achieved through a preference for traditional word-forming models and an imitation of long-familiar clusters of words and phrases.

To this is added the need for a moderate opacity of diction reminding the listener of the material’s “foreignness,” just as the stage costume is frequently employed to remind the spectator of it. One of the most delicate duties of the translator in an unrelated culture is to make the story intelligible without immersing it fully in the receiving context, allowing it rather to retain its independent civilisational

identity. The complete assimilation of the source, the full erasure of its “otherness” seems to be as counterproductive in the process of intercultural communication as is its obtrusive persistence.

The same point can be illustrated on the material of aristocratic titles. Like weaponry and other regalia of the chivalric age, they tend to be collapsed into a less detailed hierarchy in the new context that, naturally, lacks the necessary specific words for all of them. The real dilemma of the translator is whether to render them in this rather summary fashion by using titles familiar from Bulgaria’s more extensive contacts with Central Europe – “Graf,” “Herzog,” and the like, for the more specifically English and, therefore, felt as alien “earl,” “duke,” or “count” – or to assimilate them fully to the indigenous nomenclature of feudal Bulgaria that had been in place before the country was overrun by the Ottomans in the fourteenth century, thus rendering both “prince” and “duke” as “knyaz,” or “gentleman,” “nobleman” and “courtier” as “dvoryanin.” A third option, that is taken very seldom, is the adoption of the English terms, however exotic. While it is true that some translators have been more willing than others to choose this path, “duke” seems to be the only representative of the category to have gained some limited currency.

It can be argued that one should not be dogmatic about these alternative solutions and that each play should be treated individually. Thus, stories dealing with very old or indefinite, fairy-tale times, like *King Lear* or *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, could be treated in a more openly assimilatory fashion, while others, set in “actual” countries, such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*, tend, perhaps inescapably, to be de-anglicised and given a local Italian, Viennese, or whatever other colour that is less obtrusive in Shake-



speare.<sup>5</sup> The specifically English plays, especially the so-called “chronicles” or “histories,” ought to retain the fine differentiation of ranks perhaps by retaining the original words for them, however unusual some of them may sound. Such an approach is, understandably, unpopular and when practised, is apt to be inconsistent, allowing for various concessions to the alternative approaches I have already considered.

Another related effect of the Bard’s migration to the Balkans seems to be the contraction of the range of stylistic registers. Just as the hierarchy of status is collapsed into a limited number of titles and the chivalric paraphernalia are necessarily reduced to a minimum, so the fine distinctions of the use of language by each level of the social scale represented in the plays become rather blurred, for these are difficult to reproduce in a society forced by its history into a mould much more egalitarian than that of Shakespeare’s England. And even if conscientious translators do their best to recreate the whole gamut of speech styles on paper, the theatres will persistently opt for the lowest levels, which they feel to be more “realistic,” less affected, closer to the way normal people speak. The higher levels will be adapted accordingly. Thus, especially in the comedies, the many-layered structure is effectually flattened, courtly etiquette is spirited out of the text to be replaced by a lively body language and the semi-articulate verbal gestures of the mob.<sup>6</sup> This tendency is reinforced by

<sup>5</sup> Even such distinctions cannot be fully justifiable. At the Seventh World Shakespeare Congress in Valencia (18-23 April 2001) Gary Taylor made a very intriguing case for Ferrara as the original venue of *Measure for Measure*. He suggested the possibility of Middleton’s substitution of Vienna for this Italian city with its largely Italian atmosphere and character names prior to the publication of the text in the First Folio.

<sup>6</sup> See Alexander Shurbanov, “Shakespeare in Bulgaria,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36:2 (Summer 1985), 221-22; Alexander Shurbanov and Boika Sokolova, *Painting Shakespeare Red* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), esp. Chapter 7 (“The Smile and the Bite,” 206-29).

the current infatuation with the “theatrical” nature of Shakespeare’s work and the general suspicion of anything that smacks of a literary approach to the texts. As a result, we get a kind of drama in which human relationships are socially homogenised, decorum is absent, and therefore any breach of or deviation from it becomes unnoticeable.

A problem similar to that of aristocratic nomenclature is generated by the telltale names in the comedies. In the past they were not infrequently left untranslated and thus the ironical labels the author had attached to some of his personages were lost to the new audiences of the plays. It was in Valeri Petrov’s complete translation of the Shakespeare canon that the meaningfulness of these names was finally conveyed in an appropriate manner. His work provides an instructive example of how at this level too the cultural distance of the text can be retained in spite of the acculturation that it is obliged to undergo. Thus Speed is turned into Skok [i.e. Jump or Skip], Dull into Pun [Log], Costard into Kratun [Gourd/Pate], Sir Toby Belch into Sir Toby Hluts [Hiccup], and Sir Andrew Aguecheek into Sir Andrew Chikchirik [Chirrup].

The principle seems to be that the Bulgarian name should disclose the respective personage’s nature in a similarly suggestive – though not an identical – way to that of the English name. The deviation from full equivalence is necessitated by the need to make the new name sound not as a Bulgarian nickname but as a dually oriented lexico-semantic unit, conveying a clear, albeit often figurative meaning for the new audience while at the same time resembling phonetically what sounds like English names to it. For the most part the desired effect is achieved by choosing short, preferably monosyllabic, words containing consonant clusters or other characteristics denoting “Englishness.” Sometimes this can even be a humourously appended diphthong as in Plitkow for Justice Shallow, defamiliarising the Bulgarian word for “shallow,” which is “plitko.” Such an approach calls for a good deal of jocular inventiveness and it reaffirms the well-

known fact that translation is above all the art of compromise, though the compromise should never be arbitrary. And, far from being the sign of surrender, such tactics demonstrates the ability of the art to triumph where it seems least likely to succeed. True, these victories are most often achieved through patient negotiation rather than through an all-out frontal attack, but their glory is no less real for that.

As I pointed out in the beginning, proverbs tend not to find ready analogues in less closely related languages. Thus, in order to reproduce adequately the idiomatic style of the original, the translator feels obliged to search his own linguistic tradition for sayings which may conceal similar tenors behind different vehicles. Valeri Petrov again offers some interesting solutions of such problems. He has rendered Shakespeare's "from the smoke into the smother" as a familiar Bulgarian phrase – "ot trun ta na glog" (i.e. "from the thorn onto the thistle").<sup>7</sup> This kind of transformation, however, is not so easy to achieve in all cases. And then, the translator might decide that the overall stylistic effect would be better secured if a new, unfamiliar expression modelled on the English original was coined. In this way the said literary artist would make his/her own contribution to the national store of proverbs, just as Shakespeare did for his own tongue. Of course, in order to do that, he/she would have to imitate the succinct form typical of these phrasal units as well as their remarkable syntactic, phonetic, and prosodic balance.

Petrov has done this more than once, creating a number of Bulgarian sayings analogous to the English ones, that could easily be mistaken for traditional. Their vehicles are faithfully approximated in the new language and even if you don't know the language, on

<sup>7</sup> *As You Like It*, edited by Agnes Latham, in *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works*, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), 1.2.277. Further Shakespearean references will be to this edition of the *Complete Works*.

hearing them, you can recognise their characteristic form. A few examples may be useful at this point:

“As white as a lily and as small as a wand” – “*Zhulta kato prust, tunka kato trust*”;

“If it be confessed, it is not redressed” – “*Vinata se priznava – vreda si ostava*”;

“Wit, whither wilt?” – “*Umen um, po koy drum?*”

The best practice of proverb rendition illustrates one of the basic rules of translation: its two complementary principles of familiarity and novelty should always operate in conjunction, so that the final product is both intelligible and refreshing for the audience.

Wordplay of all kinds, including malapropism, as we saw, is not simple to retain in the process of transference across language borders, especially when cultural and linguistic disparity is considerable. Yet its dilution or omission can often create problems. Thus, repartee of the following kind is essential for character building in *Much Ado about Nothing*:

BEATRICE ... He is a very valiant trencher-man; he hath an excellent stomach.

MESSINGER And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE And a good soldier to a lady; but what is he to a lord?<sup>8</sup>

If you miss one or two of these quick sparks of Beatrice's wit, hinging on the similarity of sound between two different phrases and therefore impossible to retain automatically in translation, you deprive her character of its most attractive facet and the play of its central tone. Rosalind and the whole of *As You Like It* would similarly be robbed of their irresistible charm if a translator decided that he could do without the heroine's badinage abounding in puns. Much of the incomparable magic of Shakespeare's romantic comedy stems

<sup>8</sup> *Much Ado about Nothing*, edited by A. R. Humphreys, 1.1.49-53.

from wordplay. And it is precisely because wordplay is the hardest thing to reproduce in translation that the comedies have so few congenial renditions in other languages. The problem, of course, is universal, but it becomes the harder the further away you travel from the original both in space and in time.

Verbal wit can be quite important for the tragedies too. Without it Hamlet would pale no less than would Beatrice); or Rosalind. His very first cue, "A little more than kin, and less than kind," is already a challenge for the translator in whose language there are no two such words for relatedness as "kin" and "kind," both similar and dissimilar at the same time.<sup>9</sup> The ingenious play on the different meanings of the word "arms" in the 5.1 exchange between the grave-diggers in *Hamlet* discussing Adam's social status strikes one of the important chords of this complex drama. It would be interesting to compare the variety of roundabout ways in which translators render the pun through the sometimes radically different means of their own languages. The usual method they eventually resort to is the one of compensation: if it is impossible to extract paronomasia from the same lexico-semantic item as in the original, the translator should try to find another one in the same passage or somewhere not too far off and produce a similar effect on this basis.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is argued, the overall tone of the original is approximated in the translation though the two texts diverge in their details. Theoretically this sounds fine, especially as there does not seem to be any practical alternative to it, yet when we are faced with such crucial images reflecting central

<sup>9</sup> *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, 1.2.65.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Jiří Levý, *Umění překladau* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1963), III, C, 3. The problem has been treated in depth by the Russian theorists of translation, including: A. V. Fedorov, *Osnovy obshchei teorii perevoda* (Moscow: Vysshaya shkola, 1968), 146ff; and Y. I. Retsker, *Teoriya perevoda i perevodcheskaya praktika* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1974), 56-63; and L. C. Barhudarov, *Yazyk i perevod* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1975), 218-21.

issues of the entire work, such advice is hardly helpful. All attempts to play on the similarities of other words and ideas in the same passage result in blunting the sharp edge of Shakespeare's joke.

Moreover, the roundabout solution of such problems can be quite tricky if it is not practised with utmost caution and sensitivity. It is often due to accumulated convolutions and deviations of semantic nuances that the tone and even the message of an entire play in translation may become inadmissibly different from the original. Poetic imagery is an area in which such damage can easily be done with the best of intentions. Of course, the worst course a translator can take is that of interpreting the "meaning" of an image, its tenor, and reducing it to a flat statement. It is hardly necessary to argue that the suggestive power of an image is much larger than its immediate meaning and, what is more, ever since the ground-breaking studies of scholars like Caroline Spurgeon and Wolfgang Clemen, we cannot be oblivious to the intricate networks of related imagery amounting to compact structures parallel to the plots of the plays and indispensable for the creation of attitude and atmosphere.<sup>11</sup> These systems, especially in the great tragedies, should be preserved in their entirety with the same care with which the details of dramatic action are preserved. Consequently, any departure from the specific character of such a system of imagery should be practised with extreme caution.

However, the task is quite difficult in a relatively remote culture and language, and it is only since the 1970s that a more consistent effort has been made in Bulgaria to secure the sets of images in translation. Even now the reproduction of these structures is less elaborate than the original. A case in point is the recurrent use of the word "nature" in *King Lear*. It is well known that this lexeme functions with

<sup>11</sup> Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935); and Wolfgang H. Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London: Methuen, 1951).

a variety of meanings in Shakespeare's most complex tragedy.<sup>12</sup> A Bulgarian translator is often forced to resort to different words for each of these. As a result, the chain of repetitions and phonetic echoes is broken and an important thematic pattern is irretrievably lost.

Hamlet's pronouncements are often couched in figurative language and they are especially important to render correctly because many of them tend to turn into popular quotations and function in all sorts of contexts. And, what is perhaps no less important, they as a rule do form an organic part of the play's characteristic pattern of imagery drawn from disease and corruption and thus essential for its general impact. Sometimes these seem to have sounded unpleasant to the ear of the Bulgarian translators and have prompted them to look for more palatable substitutes.

The words concluding one of Hamlet's first soliloquies, at the end of Act 1, are at least marginally connected with this strain:

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.

(*Hamlet*, 1.5.196-97)

An inspired Bulgarian translation of 1919 turns this metaphor into something like the following:

Shoreless is time. O sorrowful plight:  
How could I ever fix it within shores?<sup>13</sup>

This new version is obviously quite different from the original. It reflects the standard Romantic expectations of the receiving culture

<sup>12</sup> On this topic see John Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of "King Lear"* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949).

<sup>13</sup> This translation belongs to a gifted poet, Geo Milev (1895-1925).

and so it veers away from the source figure of prosaic connotations, replacing it with what is traditionally accepted as poetic and sublime. Time is presented in the hallowed guise of the sea rather than that of an anatomical or mechanical aberration.

Moreover, it is no longer a particular moment in history (*the time*), which has gone wrong and needs correcting but the very notion of existence flowing into eternity (*time*). The overall message seems to be that time is endless and metaphysically incomprehensible and that a feeble human being cannot hope to change the universe. From the concretely political concern of the original we are transported to a generally philosophical notion of the human predicament. Such orientation corresponds with an ingrained romantic interpretation of *Hamlet* in European culture, but it obliterates a basic level of meaning and suggestion, of which our age has again become keenly aware. And as this happens to be Bulgaria's first artistically accomplished translation of the tragedy executed by a celebrated poet, the above couplet has functioned as a staple Shakespearean quotation for a number of generations, and it is now almost impossible to replace with anything closer to the authentic image. Shakespeare as a dramatic poet and Hamlet as a character have been unwittingly refashioned to serve a new order of priorities established by a different cultural set-up.

While good translators always strive to recreate the original they work from in its true shape, the distance of place and time encoded in their cultures and languages compels them to end up with texts that are in many ways quite different and new. This makes the number of alternative Shakespeares virtually unlimited. It can perhaps even be argued that it is partly the reason for the amazing longevity of Shakespeare's work. Of course, this longevity is first of all due to an exceptional individual achievement but, in the final analysis, it is a collective product. And if the potent initial impulse still holds it together as a recognisable entity, the subsequent contribution of an ever-expanding circle of collaborators makes its wealth of variations



truly unencompassable. We can conclude that the continuing expansion of the multifaceted Shakespearean universe is not so much due to the personal choices of its builders as to the vast variety of pressures under which they work.

# Translation at the Crossroads of the Past and Present<sup>1</sup>

Jean-Michel Déprats

The theatre is an arc stretching between the past and present, between the age of a text and the reality of a body that exists in the present; “at the crossroads of the past and the present, [it] unites a time-space continuum within itself.”<sup>2</sup> To be sure, contemporary plays are performed, but Roger Planchon denies that true staging is involved here.<sup>3</sup> Twentieth-century theatre is primarily devoted to going over the Classics, to rereading these “broken structures,” these “sunken galleons” as French director Antoine Vitez describes them.<sup>4</sup> In his opinion, the purpose of contemporary staging is not so much to *restore*, as to transform, “by using their parts to create something else.” Our task, says Vitez, is “to show the chasms of time.”

Indeed, the question that arises for staging, which Vitez sees as an

<sup>1</sup> A former, longer, and slightly different version of this article entitled “Translation at the Intersections of History” is published in *Shakespeare and Modern Theatre: The Performance of Modernity*, edited by Michael Bristol and Kathleen McLuskie, with Christopher Holmes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 75-92.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Banu, *Mémoires du théâtre* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1987), 13 (my translation).

<sup>3</sup> “One can only be a stage director for ‘Classics’ [...] There is no such thing as a critical production of a work by Brecht or by Genet. These works have appeared at the same time we have, so it is impossible to put them in perspective. The hidden ‘why’ in staging the ‘Classics,’ works from the past, is perspective or historic hindsight.” See Roger Planchon, “Interview with Jean-François Halté and Charles Tordjman,” *Pratiques* 15/16 (July 1977), 53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Antoine Vitez, “Théorie/Pratique Théâtrale,” *Dialectiques* 14 (Summer 1976), 9 (my translation).

“art of variation,” is its relationship to these fissures of time, to a past that is lost. The main issue faced in modern staging is the question of history, of the distance between the period of the text and the period of the production. Should we bring the play up-to-date by making Shakespeare our contemporary? Or, on the contrary, should we delve into the past to unearth the original context, and underline the distance that separates Shakespeare from us? Of course, the choice is not limited to these alternatives, and this schematic presentation does not take into consideration the existence and overlapping of several temporal strata. The historical period depicted in a play is not necessarily that of its creation, and staging can refer to another period than that of the performance. Put simply, we can have *Julius Caesar* played in togas, in Elizabethan costumes, in modern suits ... or in Wehrmacht uniforms. Even if the staging gains from articulating several time-space references rather than working on one paradigmatic axis, it cannot escape from history.

Nor can translation. Translations, like stagings, periodically re-assimilate traces from the past as they are exemplified by the great classic works. This task of translation, like staging, must perpetually be renewed. The intrinsic condition of the translator is perpetually to find himself “between two shores,” between the poet and the academic, between the creator and the literary critic; between the artist and the craftsman; between the original tongue and the mother tongue; between the literary and the literal meaning. But the translator of older works, like the stage director, is astride the past and the present: s/he serves two masters, and travels not only between two languages but between two periods – the time of the text and that of its reception. S/he can take a historical approach or can modernize the text, choosing to root it more firmly in one period or the other.

In a majority of cases, the translator takes a clear stand in relation to two apparently antithetical options: distance or proximity, remoteness or closeness. Over and above lexicological choices – and the choice of words is never a purely linguistic decision – translation sets

up a plan, which may or may not be deliberate, of how it will relate to the history of the language. There are basically two tendencies. Either the text is anchored in antiquated language, or the old text is rendered in the most contemporary language possible. One can accentuate the author's time, or the audience's time. This choice calls for an analysis of the text's relationship with the past. The historic approach emphasizes what is over, what is unique and discontinued. Transposing the text into contemporary language, on the contrary, emphasizes underlying affinities; it underlines things that are permanent, and describes history as the return of the past, in a different guise.

I would like to illustrate the different "staging" effects of translations which approach texts from a historical or from a modern standpoint, and to analyze the textual processes by which this game of "pretence" is established. For it appears to me that each approach, which is justifiable in and of itself, is the product of a strategy based on a specific falsehood. Translations of Shakespeare lend themselves well to this exercise.

The desire to translate Shakespeare into language that would correspond to sixteenth-century English is a legitimate one. What can be more honest than leaving the work to rest in its original linguistic and cultural environment, and keeping intact the threads that bind it to its epoch and historical context? As French director Daniel Mesguich polemically argues, "History is essentially found in the text. [...] What is a modern French translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*? [...] It is surely not a translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into modern French."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the translator, a messenger of the past, cares more about the history of the language than anyone else. Translating can be perceived as the inaugural gesture for the survival of a work. The translator is the teacher of what has been lost, and takes on the role of curator for the history of the language; in so doing, he responds to what is perhaps his strongest calling:

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Mesguich, "Interview with Daniel Boughnaux, Gilles Liporetsky, and André Targe," *Silex* 3 (1977), 13-35 (p. 27).

Language is always what exists before oneself: it is the past. We need its memory [...] Its protection is its past. And what do we know of its future? How many words from the Middle Ages, from the Renaissance, and from more recent centuries, have already disappeared! The translator of ancient texts can rekindle the existence of things that have been lost, bring to light words that have been forgotten [...] that which has been lost can be rediscovered.<sup>6</sup>

Translation can then be described, in the words of Georges Banu, as “the utopian attempt to bring the memory of the past back to life.”<sup>7</sup>

It remains to be seen what means can be used for this resurrection, for making this utopian prospect viable, so to speak. The 1899 translation of *Hamlet* by Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob provides an interesting example.<sup>8</sup> Schwob objects strongly to modernized translation:

The critics here have not reflected on the fact that sixteenth-century style is no longer the one at hand. Putting Shakespeare’s language in today’s mode would be about of the same order as wanting to translate a page from Rabelais into Voltaire’s language. We have to keep in mind that Shakespeare was thinking and writing during the reigns of Henri IV and Louis XIII.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, their translation is only intermittently archaic and very slightly so. For instance, in the “sullied flesh” soliloquy, Hamlet refers to his mother, who showers her husband with amorous attentions, “*comme si son désir eût forcé par sa pâture même.*” [“As if increase of appe-

<sup>6</sup> See Florence Delay’s interview with Georges Banu, “Le Traducteur de verre,” *Théâtre/public* 44 (March–April 1982), 29 (my translation).

<sup>7</sup> Delay, “Le Traducteur de verre,” 29 (my translation).

<sup>8</sup> *Hamlet*, translated by Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob (Paris: Gérard Lebovici Editions, 1986). This translation was staged for the first time in May 1899 at the Sarah Bernhardt Theater, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role.

<sup>9</sup> Morand and Schwob, *Hamlet*, Jacket Copy (my translation).

tite had grown / By what it fed on”].<sup>10</sup> *Forci, pâture*: one of the words is rare, and the other belongs to the literary register. As we will see in a few examples, the archaic effect is not the reflection of true historic and linguistic authenticity, but rather the result of rhetorical processes such as using an elevated literary level of language, resorting to rare words, and dispensing with normal syntax.

Further on, Polonius says to Ophelia, “*combien l’âme est prodigue à prêter à la langue des serments*” [“How prodigal the soul / Lends the tongue vows”].<sup>11</sup> The turn of phrase *prodigue à* is not properly established in French. But it has a fragrance of yesteryear, is suffused with the past, and thus creates a slightly archaic impression. One of the questions that arises concerning translations that are deliberately archaic is that of the authenticity of the language thus produced. It would appear that there is necessarily an aspect of artifice to be found in the recreation of archaic language.

Michel Vittoz, for one, who translated *Hamlet* for Daniel Mesguich into pseudo-archaic French, is aware that he is working with artifice. His archaic expressions are concocted; he is deliberately aiming at an effect in staging with an eye to literature rather than to authenticity. Furthermore, his adaptation is heterogeneous: he blends “archaic” language, in which Elizabethan English is translated into pseudo-sixteenth-century French, with modern language that sometimes uses the latest “in” word games. Alongside Latin constructions, false syntactic archaisms (placing the noun complement before the noun), and true lexical archaisms (*oncques, remembrance, souvenance*), his translation also refers to current texts and uses organized/disorganized phraseology that is eminently modern. Set mid-way between Ronsard, Mallarmé, Maurice Scève, and Lacan, Vittoz’s translation belongs to no particular period: it is no closer to Shakespeare’s time than it is to our own. The main effect is to distance *Hamlet* from us and to mark it as

<sup>10</sup> Morand and Schwob, *Hamlet*, 47. See also *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982), 1.3.144.

<sup>11</sup> Morand and Schwob, 58; *Hamlet*, 1.3.116-17.

an old, archaic text, connected to dramatic rhetoric that we no longer remember except as a literary keepsake. The stylistic processes that are used here are designed to suggest what a great distance separates us from *Hamlet*.

One short extract from Claudius' initial monologue, will illustrate the tone of this translation:

CLAUDIUS: Combien qu'en la mémoire nous soit encore récente  
La mort de notre frère chéri Hamlet et qu'il sied  
De maintenir nos cœurs en le chagrin, ainsi que le front  
De l'entier royaume tout à douleur contracté,  
C'est assez que notre souvenance aille vers lui avec tristesse  
Sans que gagne l'oubli de nous-mêmes.<sup>12</sup>

This *artifact* is sufficiently elaborate to conjure up a recreated memory of sixteenth-century language. This is done by highly literary means (the French text is much more sophisticated than the original), which make Shakespeare sound like a Mannerist artist. It is also striking to see how self-reflexive this translation is.

While they both employ techniques that suggest archaism, neither Morand and Schwob's nor Vittoz's translation of *Hamlet* is a naively natural and deliberately archaic translation that wants to pawn itself off as authentic. We are not presented with a translation "the way that" this text would have been translated in a historical period different from the time when the translations were actually made. Examples of that kind can be found in the attempts by Littré, Borchardt and Pézard to translate Dante into Provençal, Old German and Old French, respectively. Pézard for instance has opted for studied lan-

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Hamlet* 1.2.1-7. I use the 1977 version, parts of which had appeared in *Silex* 3 (p. 9). The 1986 version brings the text closer to us by eliminating certain archaisms and syntactic breaks: "*et qu'il sied*" becomes "*et qu'il convienne*," "*en le chagrin*" becomes "*dans le chagrin*." *Hamlet*, adapted by Michel Vittoz (Paris: Éditions Papiers/Théâtre, 1986).

guage that purports to be the equivalent of Dante's Italian.<sup>13</sup>

The deliberately archaic translation refuses to lie by translating what is old into something new. It does not attempt to erase the passage of time and, in this case, it even draws attention to the age of the text and puts it on stage, but in so doing, however, it tends to deny us access to the text. Its only horizon is scholarly erudition; its only literary affinity is the pastiche. There are antiquarians, and cabinet-makers of period pieces. Translating Dante or Shakespeare into fourteenth- or sixteenth-century French inevitably means creating a period piece. "The great problem in philological translation," writes Antoine Berman,

is that it has *no* horizon. By that I mean, not only in terms of principles of translation, but it is not *anchored* in the language and the literature of the culture into which it is being translated. The starting point for one's translation is always a certain *state* in one's language and culture.<sup>14</sup>

When Yves Bonnefoy was asked about his translation of *Hamlet* directed by Patrice Chéreau in 1988, he agreed:

A text has to be translated into the language that is spoken today: there is nothing more dangerous than dreaming of translating Shakespeare [...] in an imitation of our own language at the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Translating Shakespeare into "fictitious" French from the end of the sixteenth century is an attempt to reproduce the relationship of a present-day English speaker to a work that antedates him/her by four centuries. The contemporary aspect being aimed at in such a trans-

<sup>13</sup> *The Inferno*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, translated by André Pézard (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> Antoine Berman, "La Traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain," in *Les Tours de Babel* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress, 1985), 134 (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> "Un acte de poésie," *La Croix/L'Événement* (Sunday 10-Monday 11 July 1988), 5 (my translation).



lation is that of the translation, the author, and the original recipients of the work. It risks, however, creating such a distance between its object and contemporary readers or spectators that it threatens to destroy the living relationship that exists between them and the text.

By contrast, the primary objective of the modern translation – more precisely, the deliberately modern translation – is to stay in touch, to fill the physical and mental gap that separates the public from the actors, and the text from its readership. The modern translation is not devoid of an initial falsehood either. The text that is presented to be heard or read must give the impression that it was written today. The historicity of the original text has been occluded and short-circuited. This is the way that most translations are done, and it is for this reason that they must be redone every ten years.

The most obvious and deliberate modernized translations of Shakespeare in French are those of Jean-Claude Carrière. His translations of *Timon of Athens*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest* are themselves inextricably bound to Peter Brook's particular theatrical practice. In Brook's view, Shakespeare set up his text in such a way that the actors and the spectators were bound together by "a constant flow of words. And these words are powerful ones [...] very strongly charged. [Thanks to them] [...] we are continually connected to one another."<sup>16</sup> Brook is inspired by his ambition to "connect" the scene and the spectators. This is done in part by establishing a clear French text that flows quickly, articulated around what Brook terms "radiating words," with syntax less logical than "prismatic."<sup>17</sup> The most obvious characteristic of Carrière's translations is that they are written in modern language, with "sparse, modern terms that have a clear meaning for today's audience."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Interview for "Shakespeare et Peter Brook," prepared by Isidro Romero, Richard Marienstras, and Peter Brook for the National Audiovisual Institute, 1974-75.

<sup>17</sup> Shakespeare, *Timon d'Athènes*, French adaptation by Jean-Claude Carrière (Paris: C.I.C.T., 1974). Notes by Jean-Pierre Vincent, 97.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Interview with Peter Brook, 108.

There are no “literary” or unusual words; the sentences are incisive in their phrasing, and the vocabulary is commonplace. The *Timon* text by Jean-Claude Carrière was seen to be so direct and natural, that during one show in the suburbs, some young spectators thought they were seeing a modern play.<sup>19</sup>

For Brook,

the play is much less accessible in English than it is in French, but for the wrong reasons. Its archaic language no longer has a direct effect on the audience the way it did during the Elizabethan period. Certain passages are no longer understood by anyone other than scholars. . . . If archaic language moves to the fore, then it is a barrier that should be removed. This is what Carrière’s simple and straightforward translation does.<sup>20</sup>

Seen in this light, the translation of a text into another language, far from being either a makeshift solution or a necessary evil, is an opportunity to create a more vital bond with a work that one can clearly not bring closer in its original language.

Coming from another angle, Georges Lavaudant arrives at the same conclusion and expresses the same conviction when he declares:

When I speak of the necessity of retranslating certain authors, it seems to me that we are touching a raw nerve. In France, fortunately (or unfortunately), we have the opportunity to translate Shakespeare. [...] If, quite suddenly, we heard the British dramatist’s language in the same way we hear Rabelais and Montaigne, I am not convinced we would be as attracted by him. The curious alchemy that lets us ‘modernize’ Shakespeare through our translations is, after all, a golden opportunity. In the final analysis, perhaps we only like the poet from Stratford-on-Avon because of the permanent betrayal/recreation that

<sup>19</sup> Richard Marienstras in “La Représentation et l’interprétation du texte,” a report on *Timon of Athens* by Shakespeare and its production by Peter Brook, in *Les Voies de la création théâtrale*, vol. 5 (Paris: CNRS, 1977), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Martine Millon, “Entretien avec Peter Brook,” *Travail théâtral* 18-19 (January-June 1975), 88.

his work is subjected to by successive translations. Could it be that playing Shakespeare is still a convoluted way of working on a new linguistic work, and perhaps, of playing a contemporary text?<sup>21</sup>

In the case of Jean-Claude Carrière's translation, the decision to translate Shakespeare into modern language stems from a desire to establish a live contact that is free and natural with the audience. The choice of simple, non-literary words is not the only weapon in this strategy for a good text-audience relationship. Speed and concision are increased by a certain number of conscious cuts in the text. These cuts are adroitly spread out, and are sometimes linked to a play on words that is difficult to translate.

In certain cases, Jean-Claude Carrière breaks up a monologue and distributes the text between several characters. [...] He abridges certain passages and ends up with a translation that is shorter and clearer than the original text [...] He often breaks the Shakespearean sentence into pieces and multiplies propositions, ellipses, noun phrases and exclamations.<sup>22</sup>

Take, for example,

Ay,  
If money were as certain as your waiting,  
'Twere sure enough.<sup>23</sup>

This becomes in Carrière's translation: "*Ab oui! Vous attendez! C'est sûr! Plus sûr que l'argent!*" (48). The modernity of the French text is as much an offshoot of this syntax as it is of linguistic choices that are

<sup>21</sup> Interview with J. P. A. Bernard and J. P. Saez, *Silex* 27-28 (1984), 12-13 (my translation).

<sup>22</sup> Marienstras, "La Représentation et l'interprétation du texte," 36-37 (my translation). The previous remarks and those that follow, as well as the examples mentioned, are taken from his detailed study of Jean-Claude Carrière's translation.

<sup>23</sup> *Timon of Athens*, edited by H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1959), 3.4.46-48.

often successful: strong expressions, terms that actors can project powerfully without becoming breathless from the intricacies of an oratorical sentence, or entangled in a string of redundant adjectives that are bunched together or split up.

In addition to these changes in form that produce a clear, incisive and swiftly moving text, one can add other changes that affect the symbolic universe of the play. The text is prepared so that it can be stated energetically and received without ambiguity: whatever entrenches it too firmly in Elizabethan ideology has been expurgated. An example is the response of a guest after a meal of stones and water: "He's but a mad lord and naught but humours sway him" (3.6.106-107), becomes "*C'est un accès de folie, voilà tout.*"<sup>24</sup> The reference to the "humours" that create Timon's agitation, which refers to the four basic humours that need to be balanced for equanimity, is not rendered. Some words resounding with Elizabethan ideology are stripped of their historic content. Thus, "bond," a word designating a complex system of reciprocal obligations, is translated as *devoir*; "bounty," the virtue of munificence and liberality that characterized princes, is mistranslated as *bonté*.<sup>25</sup> In *Measure for Measure*, key terms have lost their meaning: "mercy," a word designating the Christian concept of mercifulness, which is part of the prerogatives and duties of the powerful, is translated as *pitié*. A refusal to refer to the ideology of the period inevitably leads to inaccuracies and oversimplifications that reduce the symbolic significance and the moral universe of the play. Over and above the rhetorical processes which increase speed and concision, the changes that affect the historic referent help structure a timeless text. With this *interpretation*, the original text is always modern, unfettered by specific values or by a precise moment in history. The choices that are made in translation are at the service of this interpretation or ideology.

On paper or on the stage, *images* of modern times are created,

<sup>24</sup> *Thimon d'Athènes*, translated by J. C. Carrière (Paris: C.I.C.T., 1974), 59.

<sup>25</sup> Marienstras, "La Représentation et l'interprétation du texte," 38.

through which we reappropriate the past. A textual or scenic representation of Shakespeare's universe, refracted through the prism of modern sensitivity, comes on the heels of our predecessors' more noble Shakespeare, giving us a harsher, more violent, and wilder Bard. Contemporary Shakespearean staging emphasizes the sordid, rough, and primitive in his work, such as Matthias Langhoff's *King Lear* in 1987. "Our" Shakespeare in French texts speaks more harshly, more abruptly, and more roughly than he did in preceding decades. He is stripped of literary affectations and of the wish to prettify things which led Pierre Leyris, for example, to translate the famous line from *The Tempest*, "Our little life is rounded by a sleep," as "*Notre petite vie, un somme la parachève*."<sup>26</sup> Whereas, in fact, a literal translation, "*Notre petite vie est entourée par un sommeil*," would be simpler, more accurate and more strongly charged with meaning.

Contemporary modernized Shakespearean translation moves towards more concrete and fuller language and, by the same token, towards rougher language. This raises the whole problem of the translation of bawdy. One of the main characteristics of translations from former decades was to water down, or sometimes to censure, the entire verbal stratum that referred to the body and to bodily functions, notably to sexuality. Occluding these terms is systematic in François-Victor Hugo's translations. The 1946 Pléiade edition produces note after note at the end of its volumes stating: "obscene play on words"; "untranslatable play on words." At present the tendency is rather to overemphasize obscene terms and put them into relief, setting aside more polite circumlocutions. It is striking, for example, to see how the phrase, "Aroynt thee, witch, the rump-fed ronyon cries" (uttered by the first witch in *Macbeth*) evolves in a more and more graphic manner.<sup>27</sup> "Rump-fed ronyon" has successively been rendered as:

<sup>26</sup> *The Tempest*, in *Oeuvres Complètes de Shakespeare*, translated by Pierre Leyris (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), II, 1515.

<sup>27</sup> *Macbeth*, edited by Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1951), 1.3.6.

La carogne au croupion bien nourri	F.-V. Hugo	(1860)
La rogneuse au gros derrière	Maurice Maeterlinck	(1910)
La rogne à la croupe trop grasse	Jean Richepin	(1914)
La galeuse au gros fessier	Pierre Leyris	(1977)
Ce gros cul de matrone	Yves Bonnefoy	(1983)
La galeuse au gros cul	in my translation	(1985)

A translation with *cul* might appear excessive, but it is justified as it accentuates the verbal violence that is nevertheless clearly perceptible in the tone of the original. The movement that leads successive translations to pass from *croupion* to *cul* in just over a century demonstrates quite clearly how sensitivity and taste have evolved, together with changes in perception and in how the original text is read.

The importance of the historical moment of translation in shaping how the Shakespearean text is received and interpreted emerges clearly in Antoine Berman's remarks about German translations of Shakespeare in the Romantic Age:

"A. W. Schlegel and L. Tieck," he writes, translate Shakespeare faithfully but, as Rudolf Pannwitz has said, without going far enough "to render the majestic barbarism of Shakespearean verse." This barbarism in Shakespeare that refers to things obscene, scatological, bloody, overblown [...] in short, to a series of verbal abuses [...] is an aspect that the classical Romantic German translation attempts to attenuate. It backs down, so to speak, before the Gorgon's face that is hidden in every great work.<sup>28</sup>

Translation, like staging, is not carried out by totally free agents, but by readers who exist in one moment in history and who, despite themselves, are governed by the sensitivity of a period, its literary tastes, and its relationship to the language. The different examples I have quoted confirm in a concrete way that "a translation, like a

<sup>28</sup> "La Traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain," 93 (my translation).

performance, is a very ephemeral moment, which is contingent upon the approach one takes to a work.”<sup>29</sup> This is why

bringing a foreign text to the stage requires, as a first step, the creation of a new translation as an affirmation that neither the translation nor its performance are definitive, and that they can only account for a particular dimension of the text at a given moment in its existence. This view is at odds with that of the publishers who foster a literary Utopia in which the translation is fixed forever.<sup>30</sup>

Translation, like staging, is indeed a mark of the past, transformed by the subjectivity of another period and the sensitivity of the present that gives it shape. If we regard translation more as a *relationship* than as a transfer or a means of *transport*, archaism and modernism are no longer antinomic terms: they merely express two ways in which the present can establish its links with the past. Archaization is an imaginary construction which builds up a certain image of the past. Modernization is another form of memory, out of which a different relationship is forged with the past, but it can escape neither from history nor from a historical context. In both cases, the truth of the translation must be envisaged, not in terms of adequacy, but in terms of manifestation.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Lassalle, “Du bon usage de la perte,” interview with Georges Banu, *Théâtre/public* 44 (March–April 1982), 11 (my translation).

<sup>30</sup> Lassalle, “Du bon usage de la perte,” 11.

# **“There is Tremendous Poetry in Killings”**

## **Traditions of Shakespearean Translation and Adaptation in the Low Countries**

Ton Hoenselaars

Since the final decades of the twentieth century, the field of literary translation has been challenged by a rather daunting tradition which, rather than pursuing “philological orthodoxy” transferring works of literature into a new language, welcomes a degree of independent creativity on the part of the mediator with the dictionary. Especially when it comes to translating canonical authors like Shakespeare, there is a tendency to endorse rather free translations, and also to applaud broad adaptations and spin-offs, not just in the theatre but also in the classroom and on the various Shakespeare conference platforms.<sup>1</sup> In these respects, Shakespearean translation practice in the Low Countries is similar to that in France, Italy, or Japan. However, the situation in the Low Countries differs from that in most other countries insofar as the tradition of liberal translations, adaptations, and spin-offs dates back to the earliest times. Dutch culture began to absorb Shakespearean drama even before the turn of the sixteenth century, and it is of special interest to witness how the various non-conformist and liberalizing tendencies that mark the present scene may, to a considerable degree, be interpreted as more than just a

<sup>1</sup> For a concise description of this situation see Dirk Delabastita, “Shakespeare Translation,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 222-26.



response to a range of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century developments; current translation and adaptation practice more or less explicitly interrelates with the earliest procedures, and enables one to appreciate our contemporary routine as a means of getting nearer to the spirit of Shakespeare instead of digressing from it. In this paper, therefore, I will study the interrelations between Shakespearean reception in the Low Countries during the first half of the seventeenth century and current academic and theatrical practice.

The Dutch played a vital role in the earliest production and reception of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Geographical conditions were naturally conducive to this position. The close proximity between England and the Low Countries had facilitated exchange between the two countries from the earliest times.<sup>2</sup> The short distance between the two countries explains why, during the late sixteenth century, numerous religious refugees moved from the Low Countries to reformed London and other parts of England, exchanging political protection for economic and cultural expertise.<sup>3</sup> It also explains the two nations' political relations, including the military support that Queen Elizabeth sent to the Low Countries when trying to contain the Spanish, Catholic threat on the Continent of Europe.

Examples of the earliest production and reception of Shakespeare include the work of Dutch artists resident in England, like Martin Droeshout, responsible for the engraving of Shakespeare that illuminates the First Folio; Gerard Janssen, who designed the bust of Shakespeare, now over the playwright's grave in Stratford; and

<sup>2</sup> J. F. Bense, *Anglo-Dutch Relations from the Earliest Times to the Death of William the Third* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> W. Cunningham, *Alien Immigrants to England* (1897), second edition with a preface by Charles Wilson (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969); Irene Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers in the Metropolis, 1593, 1627, 1635, 1639: A Study of an Active Minority*, Huguenot Society of London, Quarto series, 57 (London: Huguenot Society Publications, 1985); and Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Politics, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

Johannes de Witt, who made the drawing of the Swan Theatre, the copy of which, made by his friend Aernout van Buchel, must be known to every Shakespearean.

From the earliest times, however, the Low Countries also performed a textual transit function, as becomes clear from the other contacts between the Elizabethan stage and the Low Countries from the late sixteenth century onwards, involving more tangible connections relating to Shakespeare on the page and on the stage.<sup>4</sup> During the late sixteenth century, from 1586 onwards, it was the strolling players who, on their way to the courts and market places of Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, first performed in venues like Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, Brussels, and Ghent. In the Low Countries, it really began with *The Forces of Hercules* performed by the Earl of Leicester's Men (including Will Kemp) in the cathedral square at Utrecht in 1586.<sup>5</sup> Although *The Forces of Hercules* was a show without words, during which a human pyramid was built expressive of herculean vigour, the spoken drama soon followed. It is likely that the earliest English Renaissance drama in the Low Countries would have been performed in the original language, in which case the nature of the subject matter (traditional, mythological) furthered the productions' intelligibility. Only twenty-five years after the publication in German of the *English Comedies and Tragedies* (1620) – including *Fortunatus*, *Nobody and Somebody*, and *Titus Andronicus* – did the first versions appear of Shakespeare in Dutch. It would certainly be mis-

<sup>4</sup> On the earliest theatrical contacts see Albert Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: An Account of English Actors in Germany and The Netherlands and of the Plays Performed by Them during the Same Period* (1865. Rpt. New York, NY: Haskell House Publishers, 1971); and W. M. A. Creizenach, *Schauspiele der englischen Komödianten* (Stuttgart, 1889).

<sup>5</sup> See R. C. Strong and J. A. van Dorsten, *Leicester's Triumph* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1964), esp. Appendix I, 83-87; and Ton Hoenselaars, "23 april 1586: Engelse toneelspelers voeren in Utrecht *De werken van Hercules* op: Beroeps-acteurs en rederijkers," in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, edited by R. L. Erenstein et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 142-47.

leading to speak of translations in the modern sense of the term. In the 1630s, Jan Vos based his *Aran and Titus* on Shakespeare's tragedy as well as the German play on the subject.<sup>6</sup> In 1651, Lambert van den Bosch wrote *The Red and the White Rose. Or, Lancaster and York: A Tragicomedy*, a history play based, among other things, on Shakespearean chronicle matter, especially *Richard III*.<sup>7</sup> In 1654, Abraham Sybant, who was closely associated with the strolling players from England, produced a comedy entitled *De Dolle Bruyloft* (or *The Mad Wedding*). Sybant's play is, on occasion, a rather close translation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but the Dutch text is marked by many omissions (including the Induction) and by obvious revisions (like Katherina's famous final monologue).<sup>8</sup>

These early products have long been treated as historical oddities, if they were taken seriously at all. Even though these plays represented the earliest attempts to render Shakespeare in Dutch, they were long ignored. Towards the end of the seventeenth century French neo-classicism put its stamp on Dutch drama, and effectively obliterated any interest that may have existed in the original work of Shakespeare, or its Dutch spin-offs. When, towards the end of the eighteenth century – inspired by the bardolatry that was slowly being developed by the early German Romantics – the professional translation of Shakespeare came into its own, no-one ever considered consulting the earliest products that were left behind in the wake of the strolling players during the early seventeenth century. There was no sense of continuity, and although the distinguished Dutch poet

<sup>6</sup> See W. Braekman, *Shakespeare's "Titus Andronicus": Its Relationship to the German Play of 1620 and to Jan Vos's "Aran en Titus"* (Ghent: Seminar of English and American Literature of the University of Ghent, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> The English title is that suggested by O. J. Campbell who translated the play into English in 1919, and sought to reveal its structural and verbal indebtedness to Shakespeare. See Oscar James Campbell, *The Position of the "Roode en Witte Roos" in the Saga of King Richard III* (Madison, 1919. Rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> *De Dolle bruyloft: Bly-eyndend'-Spel. Gerijmt door A. Sybant* (Amsterdam: Tymon Houthaak, 1654).

and critic Willem Bilderdijk in 1823 made a detailed comparison of the Dutch and English *Titus* plays, no translator considered the need to follow in his footsteps. The same applies to those translators who with confidence practised the normative high art of Shakespearean translation that was to develop in the course of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.<sup>9</sup>

For a variety of reasons, however, this situation has started to change in recent years. Given the shift of an interest in the verbal and semantic exactitude of a translation to an appreciation of its various cultural implications, a climate has developed in which it has become possible to suggest new ways to mobilize Abraham Sybant's *Mad Wedding*, for example, for a reassessment of the Shakespearean original.<sup>10</sup> Studying this Dutch translation-*cum*-adaptation carefully, one is forced to recognize the strong imprint it carries of the Dutch marriage-counselling tradition, the Erasmian tradition with its rather moralizing advice on courtship, marital bliss, the education of children, and the delights of the couple's old age.<sup>11</sup> However, one soon finds that there are also a number of intriguing parallels between some of the Dutch material in this Erasmian tradition – like

<sup>9</sup> For a historical survey of Shakespeare in the Low Countries, see Robert H. Leek, *Shakespeare in Nederland: Kroniek van vier eennven Shakespeare in Nederlandse vertalingen en op het Nederlands toneel* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1988), 15-24. For the original English-language Ph.D. version of this study, see Robert-Henri Leek, "Shakespeare in The Netherlands: A Study of Dutch Translations and Dutch Performances of William Shakespeare's Plays," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Auckland, 2 vols. (Auckland, n.d. [=1972]). For a very useful study with special emphasis on Flanders, see Jozef de Vos's two-part "Shakespeare en het culturele leven in Zuid-Nederland," *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 32 (1978), 62-96; and 33 (1979), 131-89.

<sup>10</sup> For a biographical treatment of Abraham Sybant and his connections with the various theatre companies, see Annie van Nassau-Sarolea, "Abraham Sybant, Strolling Player and First Dutch Shakespeare Translator," *Theatre Research / Recherches Théâtrales* 13:1 (1973), 38-59.

<sup>11</sup> See Alice Clare Carter, "Marriage Counselling in the Early Seventeenth Century: England and the Netherlands Compared," in *Ten Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations*, edited by Jan van Dorsten (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 94-127.

Jacob Cats's immensely popular poem *Marriage* (orig. *Houwelick*), first published in 1625 – and Shakespeare's English *Taming of the Shrew*. The Dutch adaptation alerts one to echoes suggestive of a sixteenth-century tradition that seem as yet insufficiently researched for the original Shakespeare play. One such echo may be discerned between the Shakespeare play and the following lines from Jacob Cats's marriage poem, where the Dutch poet expresses a tolerant and divinely sanctioned view of newly weds who, unlike courting couples, are given permission to enjoy each other's company in public:

It would appear that even God finds some delight  
 When from a pure desire married folk will frolic.  
 What is not fit in others, and cannot be approved,  
 Is accepted of the married couple, without blame.<sup>12</sup>

Against the background of this Dutch marriage-counselling verse, one is tempted to reconsider Shakespeare's original "Kiss me Kate" episodes, with special attention for the final occurrence in the last act of the comedy:

*Kath.* Husband, let's follow to see the end of this ado.  
*Pet.* First kiss me, Kate, and we will.  
*Kath.* What, in the midst of the street?  
*Pet.* What, art thou ashamed of me?  
*Kath.* No, sir, God forbid; but ashamed to kiss.  
*Pet.* Why, then, let's home again. Come, sirrah, let's away.  
*Kath.* Nay, I will give thee a kiss. Now pray thee, love, stay.  
*Pet.* Is not this well? Come, my sweet Kate.<sup>13</sup>

If kissing in the street is part of the married couple's legitimate conduct, Katherina's claim that she is "ashamed to kiss" may be read

<sup>12</sup> Al de Werken van Jacob Cats. Met eene Levensbeschrijving van den Dichter (Schiedam, n.d.), "Vrouwe", 176, col. 2 (my translation).

<sup>13</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, edited by Brian Morris (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 5.1.130-37.

as a veiled statement about her marital status. By extension, the kiss that she ultimately gives to Petruchio marks the full recognition and acceptance of her marriage and the appertaining privileges.<sup>14</sup>

No less interesting in this respect is the case of Lambert van den Bosch's tragicomedy *The Red and the White Rose. Or, Lancaster and York* (1651), which critics like O. J. Campbell have primarily studied in a zealous attempt to establish the much-cherished genealogy with Shakespeare's *Richard III*. As a result they have ignored the play's contemporary politico-historical context, which had an immediate bearing on Anglo-Dutch relations. In the event, this Shakespearean chronicle play glanced at the regicide of Charles I and the Cromwellian protectorate, both in very close connection with the no less real friction between the Dutch monarchy and the young Dutch Republic.

Unlike Shakespeare, Lambert van den Bosch begins his play with the death of Edward the Fourth and the succession of his young son, Edward the Fifth. The reason why this particular moment in the history of the Wars of the Roses should be granted such prominence is that the monarch's decease as well as the succession issue in the history play had special relevance to the rather grave situation in the Republic in 1651. This was a year following the untimely death, on 6 November 1650, of Stadtholder William II, prince of Orange. William the Second's heir – the future William III of England – was still an infant, requiring a regent. This temporary and alternative form of leadership caused considerable concern in the Low Countries, as it did in England after the death of Edward the Fourth, when the future Richard the Third held the office of regent. The anxiety in the

<sup>14</sup> For the sake of comparison, it is worth checking Shakespeare's original dialogue against Sybant's rendering of it (here retranslated into English): PETRUTIO: Are you ashamed of me? KATRIJN: No, far from it. But kissing here is not appropriate (*The Mad Wedding*, 62). For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Ton Hoenselaars and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, "Abraham Sybant doma *The Taming of the Shrew* per la scena di Amsterdam," in "*The Taming of the Shrew*" dal testo alla scena, edited by Mariangela Tempera (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Editrice, 1997), 191-204.

young Dutch Republic with its innovative political ideal was certainly understandable given the continuing tug-of-war between the Amsterdam oligarchy and the house of Orange.

This Shakespearean adaptation, however, also airs other political misgivings in a Dutch theatre setting. England, as it is presented in the new play, is a source of embarrassment in people's eyes, even in the eyes of the English characters it presents. As Lord Stanley puts it at the end of a sixty-line monologue trying to account for the chaos that wrecks the nation:

although the kingdom has found again its Lord in Edward, our heads are bowed under the burden of great sins. [...] we became guilty of a crime, one which forever will remain the shame and disgrace of our State, because King Richard, the lawful prince, was destroyed by the hand of a murderer – a crime which Pomfret must still lament – and such noble blood was spilled so wantonly. *Everyone considers it a disgrace to England, that she so easily lays hands upon her legitimate Lord.*

(Campbell, 103-4; italics added)

This speech, as translated by O. J. Campbell, at first expresses an unmistakable sense of national shame over the regicide committed by the English to have Henry the Fourth succeed Richard the Second. A closer look at the original Dutch version of 1651, however, reveals that the phrase “legitimate Lord” should read “legitimate *Lords*” (for “wettige Heeren”). In this way, the final sentence comes to read: “Everyone considers it a disgrace to England, that she so easily lays hands upon her legitimate lords.” With this minor change from singular to plural, the situation in the play no longer refers to Richard the Second only; it also directly interrelates with the very recent Puritan regicide on Charles the First in 1649.

In the case of *The Red and the White Rose*, the decision to abandon a normative approach to Shakespearean translation and adaptation in favour of an assessment of the possible politico-cultural transfer involved in the appropriation, brings into focus, on the domestic

level, the young Republic's misgivings about the successor to the Stadtholder, as well as its anxiety over the threat posed by the anti-monarchic, Protestant faction in the cities. On the international level, the play expresses misgivings about the Republic's English neighbours, two years after the death of Charles the First, two years also into the Puritan reign of Oliver Cromwell, which severely complicated the Republic's foreign diplomatic relations.

Both Abraham Sybant's *Mad Wedding* and Lambert van den Bosch's *The Red and the White Rose* bear out Dirk Delabastita's observation about

the necessity to stop viewing translation as a purely linguistic process and to regard it instead as a culturally determined intertextual operation showing many intrinsic similarities to other forms of (intralingual, interlingual, intersemiotic) rewriting.<sup>15</sup>

The increasing readiness to view Shakespearean translations more as instances of intricate cultural appropriation than as objects for allegedly neutral, descriptive analysis, does not only manifest itself in enlightened academic circles which recognize that history includes the past; it also has its counterpart in the present-day theatre world where new Dutch texts are produced for stage usage.

In the current theatre scene of the Low Countries an analogous change in attitude towards Shakespearean translation may be observed. Theatre makers are increasingly finding it less important to consult the professional translator, and there is a growing tendency for directors to provide their own lay translations, often only for a single production. There are a number of reasons for this move away from professional translations and the successive proliferation of so-called directorial translations. Although it is costly to have translations made for a single production, it is even less attractive to use

<sup>15</sup> Dirk Delabastita, "Shakespeare in Translation: A Bird's Eye View of Problems and Perspectives," in *Accents Now Known: Shakespeare's Drama in Translation*, edited by José Roberto O'Shea, special issue of *Ilha do desterro* 36 (1999), 15-27 (p. 19).



an existing modern translation, because of copyright charges. As a result, given the Dutchman's reasonably developed foreign language skills, it is proving ever more convenient to piece together a new translation using texts that are available, including texts that are out of copyright, but also texts that still fall under copyright, simply because it is highly unlikely than any living translator will spend several days comparing the new text to his own, let alone claim that a certain word or phrase is genuinely his.

The figures for the year 1997 illustrate the degree to which in the late-twentieth century the professional practice of translating Shakespeare in The Netherlands is losing ground; the annual number of unofficial translations by far exceeds the number of official translations. For the year 1997, a total of eighteen original Shakespeare productions were listed. A number of these productions were of foreign origin (like Robert Wilson's *Hamlet: A Monologue*). Other productions were of Dutch origin, but so heavily adapted that no one ever took the trouble to report on the translator (like the production entitled *Venetie*, an interesting twin-adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*). Of the remaining productions for 1997, seven were individual translations by the director of the production in question:

–Ivar van Urk, director. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Translated into Dutch and adapted by Ivar van Urk (1997).

–Mirjam Koen, director. *Hamlet*. Translated and adapted by Mirjam Koen (1997).

–Jeroen Kriek, director. *Hamlet*. Adapted by Jeroen Kriek (no translation stated, so apparently the word “adaptation” should be interpreted as “translation”).

–Theu Boermans, director. *Hamlet*. Adapted by Theu Boermans (Amsterdam, 1997).

–Ger Thijs, director. *Een Midzomernachtsdroom* [= *A Midsummer Night's Dream*], translated and adapted by Ger Thijs (1997).

–*Ruwbouw*. Dutch adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* by Monique Lapidaire, with material by Edward Albee, Dario Fo, Peter Handke, Dylan Thomas *et al.* (1997).

–*Titus*. Translated and adapted by Manja Topper and Kuno Bakker (1997).

There were only three productions that used regular printed translation material, and also acknowledged this. In two cases, it concerned older translations of *Macbeth* and *Othello*. Only in the case of *Titus Andronicus* was the new translation especially commissioned, but one could hardly expect one of the three main Dutch theatre companies to operate differently:

–Wim Berings, director. *Macbeth*. Translated by Willy Courteaux. Produced by De Wetten van Kepler at Theater Bis (Bois le Duc, 1997).

–Alize Zandwijk, director. *Othello*. Translated into Dutch by Bert Voeten, and adapted by Alize Zandwijk, for Stella Theatre (The Hague, 1997).

–Johan Doesburg, director. *Titus Andronicus*. Translated into Dutch by Frank Albers. Produced by Het Nationale Toneel (The Hague, 1997).

As lay translations are beginning to eclipse the production and use of original translations, there has also been an increase in Shakespearean adaptations, adaptations that have significantly met with considerable critical acclaim. A case in point is, curiously perhaps, the adaptation of Jan Vos' early seventeenth century *Aran and Titus* written for a nationwide production in 1999. The adaptation served as a liberating and subversive gesture, both with regard to the canonical, seventeenth-century Dutch playwrights who were Jan Vos's colleagues in Amsterdam (Joost van den Vondel and G. A. Bredero), and with regard to traditional Shakespeare.

The 1999 adaptation of Jan Vos's *Aran and Titus* is based on the original seventeenth-century text, spliced with generous portions of Bret Easton Ellis's controversial novel *American Psycho* (1991). The novel's main character, serial killer Patrick Bateman, is meant to be impersonated by the majority of actors, suggesting that all men are serial killers, or that humanity is a serial act of killing.

The action of the new *Aran and Titus* is located simultaneously in ancient Rome, and in a perhaps less familiar New York setting dominated by the fashion- and food-obsessed young and upwardly mobile, whose main concern is with city nightlife and entertainment. In their incessant telephone conversations, these citizens exchange social trivia, air their sadistic fantasies, and frantically reserve or cancel tables at fashionable restaurants in town. Interestingly, the two main plots, that of *American Psycho* and that of *Aran and Titus*, are closely intertwined all along, to merge most perfectly in the final scene of the production, Shakespeare's sado-masochistic banquet scene with all its attendant horrors, where killing becomes as common as eating.

Combining these two extravagant texts, written nearly three-and-a-half centuries apart, subtly reveals unexpected new depths in the Shakespearean play. The new adaptation initially stresses the discrepancy between the nature of Bateman's acts of horror and the still dignified suffering of Titus and his family. The motiveless malignity of Bateman provides a stark contrast to the justified revenge that Titus seeks to execute on Thamera and her sons. This is nowhere clearer than in the soliloquy spoken by Aran, acting at that stage also the part of Bateman:

My pain is constant and intense, and I do not wish anyone a world that is better. I really want to torment others with my pain. I want no one to escape. But even after acknowledging this – as after nearly every crime I have committed – and facing these facts, there is no catharsis. I do not acquire any deeper insights into myself, my story yields no new interpretations. This confession is meaningless.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Orig.: "Mijn pijn is constant en hevig en ik hoop ook niet op een betere wereld voor wie dan ook. Eigenlijk wil ik dat mijn pijn anderen teistert. Ik wil dat niemand ontkomt. Maar zelfs na dit te hebben toegegeven – en dat heb ik, bij zo'n beetje iedere daad die ik heb gepleegd – en deze waarheden onder ogen te hebben gezien, is er geen catharsis. Ik verwerf geen diepere kennis over mezelf, nieuw begrip kan uit mijn verhaal niet worden afgeleid. Deze bekentenis heeft niets betekend."

By contrast, Titus in the adaptation initially faces up to his mission as a justified avenger, with a cause, a motive. Like a true professional, he closes in on his unsuspecting victims. However, as in Shakespeare's play, he does so not without a certain sense of delight in his expertise. As he prepares for the last supper, his boisterous enjoyment, which may well be a form of madness, comes to prevail over any serious contemplation of the horrors of the revenge deed. As a result, it becomes difficult to distinguish Titus and Bateman. New affinities are suggested between them, a degree of identity that does not necessarily reflect favourably on Titus, who ultimately becomes the emblem of revenge that corrupts.

In the event, the 1999 script or montage of *Aran and Titus* guaranteed a dauntless and raw stage production that disturbed some and disgusted others.<sup>17</sup> The last supper scene in particular stressed an apparently universal human need for violence, the longing for a profound form of satisfaction, for some intense mode of illumination, which is really to be experienced only in the process of dying. From this perspective many moments in the adaptation of the play, but arguably also in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, retroactively began to fall into place. Like the characters' fetish with culinary climaxes. Like the rabid obsession with snuff sex. Like the more palatable violence which in this adaptation of the Renaissance play and the nineties novel emerges during phatic, every-day conversation, where the husband tries to get through to his prattling wife first by spitting at her, next by crawling across the dinner table ostentatiously to blow his nose in the hem of her dress, and finally by throwing the lid of a pot at her, which, even when it lands on her head, fails to make her stop talking about the dinner engagements for next week, about who has bought the apartment next door from whom, or who is to be

<sup>17</sup> *Aran en Titus, of Wraak en Weervraak*, a montage production by Ivar van Hurk and Het Oranjehotel. Premiere Groningen, The Netherlands, 13 February 1999. For a detailed discussion of the production see Kristine Steenbergh and Ton Hoenselaars, "A Tale of Two Cities: Jan Vos's *Aran and Titus* (1641)," *Folio* 6:1 (1999), 47-52.

married on Sunday. Violence in this incarnation of *Aran and Titus*, but to a considerable degree also in Shakespeare's highly rhetorical Roman play, is generated by a need to penetrate the slick social veneer, the small talk, the norms of civilization that mankind and womankind have created to contain their animal urges.

The message of this *Aran and Titus* is not optimistic. With the interaction of a Renaissance plot and a postmodern one, it obliges one to consider whether the world has ever looked different from the way in which Aran and Titus come to see it. This postmodern montage compels one to recognize that Jan Vos's 1641 tragedy as well as Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* may well have appealed to an audience less friendly or humane than one tends to think; surely, both Shakespeare and Vos cashed in on a range of distressing desires and sentiments much like those which some Americans paradoxically claimed they were free from when they wanted Bret Easton Ellis in the electric chair.

In addition to this gloomy adaptation of a historical Shakespearean adaptation, the theatre scene in the Low Countries has also been enhanced by a striking and innovative adaptation of Shakespeare's history plays. The Flemish production of *Ten Oorlog* (or *To War*) by Tom Lanoye and Luk Perceval sums up postwar developments in the field, and marks the direction in which Shakespearean adaptation in the Low Countries seems to be heading. As a self-conscious adaptation, this enterprise comments on itself, and, in the process, formulates what is likely to be the Low Countries attitude towards Shakespeare, translation, and bardolatry for the twenty-first century, an attitude which is, ironically perhaps, not very different from that seventeenth-century adaptation of Shakespearean history, Lambert van den Bosch's *The Red and the White Rose*.

*Ten Oorlog* is a startling production of Shakespeare's eight major history plays conveniently rewritten for the purpose and rolled into a

three-part cycle.<sup>18</sup> This epoch-making project, realized by Blauwe Maandag Compagnie in collaboration with theatres in Ghent, Antwerp, and Rotterdam, has created a stir for a number of reasons.<sup>19</sup> These include its vast scope and the sheer physical demands that the production makes on actors and audiences alike. But there is also its manifest textual irreverence *vis-à-vis* the venerable Shakespeare. The new text of the joint history plays is approximately half the length of the assembled Shakespeare originals. Moreover, the plays have been substantially rewritten, with new material added, not only in Dutch and Flemish, but also in French, Italian, British English, and modern, or, rather, postmodern American English. Naturally, on the basis of the text's inability or unwillingness to affix itself to a single target language, this 1990s rendering of Shakespeare's Elizabethan English original utterly fails to conform to traditional translation standards. But even as an adaptation the result is extravagant.<sup>20</sup>

A closer look at some of the salient strategies adopted by Lanoye and Perceval suggests that the production appeals to a series of inter-related concerns. Among other things, these include the political rule and misrule of the Belgian nation since, roughly, 1945. This type of cross-national identification is facilitated by a number of parallels and connections, some of which are historical (like the fact that John of Gaunt derived his name from the English royal family's connections with the powerful Flemish city of Ghent); others incidental and ap-

<sup>18</sup> The three parts have individual titles: Part One is entitled *In the Name of the Father and the Son*; Part Two, *See the Servant of the Lord*; Part Three, *And Deliver Us from Evil*.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of this production, see Jozef de Vos, "Ten Oorlog: The History Plays Recycled in The Low Countries." In *Folio* (Shakespeare-Genootschap van Nederland en Vlaanderen) 5:1 (1998), 7-16; and "Ten Oorlog" *Doorgeleucht*, special theme issue of the Belgian theatre journal *Documenta* 16:2 (1998).

<sup>20</sup> On the problematic status of the Lanoye and Perceval text, see Ton Naaijken, "Ten Oorlog met Tom Lanoye: Stof voor een eerste vertaalbeschrijving," in *Folio* (Shakespeare-Genootschap van Nederland en Vlaanderen) 5:1 (1998), 17-39; and Ton Naaijken, *Lof van de verandering* (Bussum: Uitgeverij Couthino, 1998), 19 and 24-25.

appropriate, like the numerous parallels between Shakespeare's Lancastrian King Henry VI and the Belgian King Baudouin. Both kings were seen by many as sensitive pacifiers among quarrelling factions. Baudouin and Henry also had their piousness in common, and with both there was widespread anxiety at the moment of their unexpected deaths, because there was no son to succeed them.

Also the use of language in the adaptation is rooted in the political geography of present-day Belgium, a state made up of two distinct regions, Flanders and Wallonia, each with a different language. This condition directly reflects on the adaptors' principal medium, language, whose international variety suggests that it is impossible to produce a "Belgian" translation of Shakespeare in a single, unified tongue. In other words, the so-called Belgian language battle (or *taalstrijd*, between Dutch and French) cuts right to the heart of this Shakespeare translation-*cum*-adaptation where civil war is diametrically opposed to the notion of linguistic unity.

One of the more notable changes is the representation of Richard the Second's queen in the early scenes of the first part of the trilogy, *In the Name of the Father and the Son*. Unlike Shakespeare, who first presents the queen in the famous garden scene where she expresses her apprehensions about the fate of her husband (2.2), Lanoye and Perceval introduce her as *La Reine* in the very opening scene of the play. The Flemish adaptors foreground her even further by turning Shakespeare's young but mature wife to Richard into an infant bride. Lanoye and Perceval here depart from the Shakespeare text. On one level, there is little doubt that this manipulation of the queen in the text of *Richard II* serves to align the play more accurately with the disturbing Belgian present, following the traumatic discovery of a nationwide practice of child abuse, which had gone undetected for years because of the insufficiency and corruption of state justice. However, on another level the departure from the Shakespeare text here is also effected in the knowledge that it was really Shakespeare who departed from his historical source material. It was Shakespeare who made the

princess twice as old as her historical counterpart in order to profit from an additional, mature female speaker in the play.<sup>21</sup> It was Shakespeare who purged the Holinshed history of factual child abuse, thus covering up the fact that Lanoye and Perceval, representing a country ridden with the trauma of hypocrisy about child abuse, reconstruct and restore. Clearly, Lanoye and Perceval's reason for subverting Shakespeare's presentation of English history here is not any desire for historical accuracy; on occasion, their own departure from Shakespeare's history is even more drastic. Instead, it is to align Shakespeare's English history to the present needs of their own country.

Naturally, the allusions to child abuse in the first part of the trilogy are also easily reactivated during the famous sequence of the princes' murder in the Tower in the third part, *And Deliver Us from Evil*. The adaptors even heighten the sense of horror when they have Richard devour the princes' corpses on stage. To Richard, as Lanoye sees it, the two nephews are his greatest source of humiliation, the most painful reminder of his wickedness, of his hideous exterior, of his unloved state. Hence they are also the true agents of his disintegration, a process whose lowest point is reached when Richard eats them in full view of the audience, in an image worthy of the painter Francis Bacon. The language of the adaptation has disintegrated from the regular blank verse in *Richaar Deuzième* to the postmodern chaos of *Risjaar Modderfokker den Derde* with its echoes of uncouth Tarantino talk:

KING RISJAAR (crying)  
 Godbloddiemodderfokking ranzig rottenis  
 Of alabaster arms vol merg en innocence ...  
 So blow it ... modderfokking ... virgin ass ...  
 Vol suck my dick gedachten uitgekotst ...  
 O God: de gruwel ... Misdaad wreed en bloedig  
 Ooit in dit land gepleegd ... Het is volbracht.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> On the French Princess' unhistorical maturity in years, see *King Richard II*, edited by Peter Ure (London: Methuen, 1956), xliii.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Lanoye and Luk Perceval, *Ten Oorlog*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1998), III, 94.



*Ten Oorlog* is a representative example of the debunking trend that has begun to mark the Shakespeare scene in the Low Countries. It is a self-conscious trend, and the adaptation revealingly alludes to it in an attempt, paradoxically, to stress Lanoye and Perceval's love for Shakespeare. It may be heard in the words of Richard III, who is convinced that if his mother had loved him, she would have killed him at birth ("The cowardice of your love let me live, Where true love would have strangled me," 3:112). There is the suggestion here that love may be a form of weakness and that strangulation is a form of love, a virtue. By analogy, the suggestion is that bardolatry over a text that fails to meet the needs of the present day requires an act of literary debunking. This is the best respect one can pay a text of Shakespeare's, and keep it valid today. A continuation of this paradoxical philosophy may be found in Richard the Third's rhyming couplet spoken after killing his brother George of Clarence earlier in the Belgian rendering of the play:

One thing I'll teach de wereld, willens nillens;  
There is tremendous poetry in killings.

(*Ten Oorlog*, III, 74)

There is poetry in Shakespeare killings in the history play, but there is no less poetry in killing Shakespeare's histories and calling the product *Ten Oorlog*. In the case of *Ten Oorlog*, Shakespeare is a means towards an end. The two Belgians' admiration for Shakespeare produces a need to destroy the sacrosanct image that Shakespearomaniacs have been constructing since the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Indeed, there is little difference, really, between *The White and the Red Rose* of 1651, and *Ten Oorlog*. Both Lambert van den Bosch and the Belgian translators-*cum*-adaptors go to Shakespeare's history plays as a creative means of writing their own national history, at a time of crisis over a succession issue, doubt about the proper functioning of the system of justice, and other forms of civil unrest. Where the two differ is in the fact that the 1651 text applies itself to

its task as though it were the most natural thing in the world, whereas Tom Lanoye and Luk Perceval in *Ten Oorlog* need to parade as iconoclasts; in order to achieve what *The White and the Red Rose* of 1651 did, they have to wade through two or three centuries of normative translation and a fair degree of bardolatry. Given the fact that audiences everywhere in the Low Countries have received this iconoclastic Shakespearean production with open arms, it seems likely that the future of Shakespeare translation and production in the Low Countries is likely to develop in this cosmopolitan direction.<sup>23</sup>

Surveying the current climate in the Low Countries, one may witness how the traditional art of Shakespeare translation is increasingly coming under pressure. The importance of the trained and skilled translator is on the wane, as pirated Shakespeares are pasted together by theatre makers, including bunglers and amateurs. The good news lies in the highly favourable popular response to the professional type of translation-*cum*-adaptation exemplified by *Ten Oorlog*. This is, I assume, what Dirk Delabastita meant when he stated that:

Post-modernity and the spread of hypertext-related textual practices have recently made it fashionable to dethrone the sacred original and to decentre the notion of translational equivalence. Translation throws overboard its subservience to the original along with its claims of being the original's authentic representation. Translation thereby asserts its transformative nature and its inherent affinity with other textual modes of intervention in intertextual space (rewriting, reading, adaptation, parody, pastiche, criticism, citation, and so on). If this intellectual climate persists, we may reasonably expect that traditionally orthodox concepts of translating Shakespeare will come under more and more pressure and risk dissolving at least partly in a plurality of rewriting processes.

(Delabastita, "A Bird's Eye View," 25-26)

<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, *Ten Oorlog* has also been "translated" into "German." In that guise it featured at the Salzburg Festival during the summer of 1999, before moving to Hamburg. The Austrian authorities at first refused children under sixteen admission to the play, but this ban was soon lifted.

At the onset of the new millennium, one is certainly entitled to wonder whether, in the multilingual Low Countries but also in a multinational world where English increasingly functions as the *lingua franca*, we are not about to leave behind the professional art of translation. Having become part of a single, global Shakespearean culture, where every native translation of “To be or not to be” is likely to sound more alien than the foreign, English original, our main interest is likely to be in personal and individual attitudes towards Shakespeare and his work, attitudes which, nearly as a matter of course, would adopt the form of adaptation after adaptation.

# Notes on Shakespeare in Dutch Translation

## Historical Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

Dirk Delabastita

We all know that there are different ways to speak about what is allegedly the 'same' reality. Take the obvious example of "love," which is sung, spoken or written about by poets, marriage counselors, psychoanalysts, theologians, endocrinologists, by those who experience its bliss, or try to cope with its loss. All these discourses employ a different vocabulary, incorporate different aims, and reflect different kinds and degrees of personal involvement; they are based on different presuppositions and mobilise different conceptual frameworks. You end up wondering if they are really about the 'same' phenomenon. In a less dramatic way perhaps, the theme of "Shakespeare in translation" presents a comparable situation. It has been discussed on countless occasions, but here too, it seems one has to distinguish between different discursive positions. Acting individually or along the more collective lines of some social group, different authors/speakers appear to have a special relationship with the theme of Shakespeare in translation and, accordingly, they tend to develop specific discourses of their own: the translators themselves, theatre directors, actors, theatre reviewers, literary reviewers, and of course

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper, in Dutch, was read at a conference held at the University of Utrecht (20-21 June 2001) and subsequently published in *Folio* (Shakespeare Society of the Low Countries), 8:2 (2001), 5-17. I am grateful to the journal's editors for their permission to publish the present English version.

academics, who in their turn come from a wide range of disciplines and intellectual traditions: translation studies, comparative literature, English studies, literary history, theatre history, post-colonial theory, and so on.

Whenever the subject of Shakespeare in translation is broached, it makes sense to be aware of such differences, so as to prevent the polyphonic divergence from degenerating into a cacophony of voices talking at cross-purposes. This recommendation is particularly in order in settings where translators and translation scholars are brought together on the same discussion platform, as is often the case in seminars devoted to the translation of Shakespeare. In this essay, I shall briefly address the translation and reception of Shakespeare into the Low Countries, from the vantage-point of the translation scholar, not that of the translator.<sup>2</sup> For better or for worse, I have never translated a single Shakespearean scene in my life so far. This situation undoubtedly deprives one of the intimate 'inside' knowledge of the subject and of the living relationship with it that translators can draw on in their discussions of the subject; but then, this drawback is hopefully compensated for by the scholar's greater critical distance, the broader historical picture, and the enhanced methodological awareness. We are dealing here not with different degrees, but with different kinds of expertise.

Translators have occasionally found it difficult to see or acknowledge the relevance of translation studies. Consider the following citation, which I excerpted from a critical review of a Dutch book entitled *Uitnodiging tot de vertaalwetenschap* (literally 'an invitation to

<sup>2</sup> I shall limit myself to a discussion of the broad patterns of reception. For a detailed survey of translations and representations in the Low Countries the reader may consult Robert H. Leek's *Shakespeare in Nederland* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1988). Despite a number of methodological flaws (see my review in *Spiegel der Letteren* 32 [1990], 125-31), this work remains a standard reference work. For more recent Dutch translations and representations in the Low Countries, the journals *Documenta* (Ghent, Belgium) and *Folio* (Utrecht, The Netherlands) are indispensable sources.

translation studies', first edition 1979). This book, co-authored by Raymond van den Broeck and the late André Lefevere, was a pioneering survey of translation studies as the young discipline presented itself at the end of the 1970s. In retrospect, it is indeed regrettable – and ironic – that this work was never made available in a more international language than Dutch. Anyway, when it came out, the book attracted some rather hostile reviews, most of these coming from practising translators. This is how the well-known translator Sjaak Commandeur introduced his review:

Als er nu eens boeken beginnen te verschijnen over de historie van de kachel, de typologische indeling van de diverse kachels, de processen die zich afspelen in de hoofden van kachelontwerpers, de wijze waarop kachels door hun gebruikers worden ervaren, en de schrijvers van die boeken noemen elkaar collega-kachelogen, bestaat er dan wel een kachelwetenschap?<sup>3</sup>

[Just supposing books start to be published about the history of the stove, about the typological division of the different stoves, about the processes that take place in the minds of stove designers, about the ways in which stoves are experienced by their users, and the authors of such books call each other fellow stove-ologists, does that mean a science of stoves exists?] (my translation)

We are meant to answer the question in the negative, of course. In the same way, Commandeur did not seem to believe that translation studies is a real discipline, or even that there might be a need for it. History has proved Commandeur embarrassingly wrong. Not only did translation studies go on to grow into one of the academic success stories of the late twentieth century; in addition, Raymond van den Broeck and especially André Lefevere soon became key players in its international development. But what I should like this example to illustrate is not so much Commandeur's lack of prophetic vision as

<sup>3</sup> Raymond van den Broeck and André Lefevere, *Uitnodiging tot de vertaalwetenschap* (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1979). The review by Sjaak Commandeur was published in *Spektator* 10 (1980-1981), 577-79; the passage quoted here is from page 577.

the ignorance and mistrust that often reign between translators and translation scholars. And even today, examples of similar misunderstandings and stand-offs are easy to find, with translators complaining that the pursuits of translation studies are “irrelevant,” its results “trivial,” and its effects even potentially “harmful” insofar as translation scholars want to “fetter” the creative freedom of the translators. Such views show a profound lack of insight into what translation studies is really about.

Summing up the aims and achievements of translation studies in a page or so is of course an impossible task. Resulting from a complex historical process, being an interdisciplinary domain if ever there was one, and having to negotiate a large number of problematic tensions and oppositions, translation studies tends to resist generalising description. But the following telegram-style observations might be said to summarise views that a majority of translation scholars would probably subscribe to:<sup>4</sup>

- *the translator's friend*: translation studies wants to rescue translators past and present from oblivion and neglect by making their work more visible (to use Lawrence Venuti's phrase) and highlighting their multiple contributions to culture and history;
- *contextualising description*: rather than fixing the *do's and don'ts* of the trade and lecturing translators on how they 'should' go about their job, translation scholars attempt to gain deeper insights into the empirical realities of translation: who translates what, for whom, from which genres and source cultures, in which

<sup>4</sup> The following are excellent discussions or surveys of the discipline: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 1998), *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, edited by Peter France (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems: Descriptive and Systemic Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2000); and *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). The leading international journals are *Target* (John Benjamins) and *The Translator* (St Jerome).

manner, using which technologies and aids, under what sort of institutional, economic, and cultural constraints and pressures, with which effects, and so on;

- *freedom and constraint*: by studying translation practices in a wide spectrum of cultural situations, translation scholars may reveal a wider choice of sociolinguistic policies and a broader range of technical solutions to practising translators than they would normally be aware of as being available within the *hic et nunc* of their cultural habitat; by arming them with this type of information, translation studies actually strengthens translators in their autonomy and their individual agency;
- *difference and function*: the context-dependence and irreducible historicity of both original and translation make it impossible to bring about real equivalence between source and target texts (let alone identity or synonymy), so that the scholar's descriptive efforts towards historical contextualisation will inevitably foreground the idea of difference; translators may deal with this situation in a variety of ways, depending on which function they want the translated text to fulfil; they may thereby attempt to cover up their tracks and create at least an illusion of equivalence, or else throw into prominence the source-target differences and the impact of their own textual intervention;
- *textual hybridity*: the traditional binary model of translation (original versus translation) is to a large extent an artificial construction which rarely matches the historical reality of translation; translations can usually be traced back to a range of sources and models, and the relationship between source text and target text is usually mediated by textual interventions and interpretive choices made by text editors, literary critics, and the like;
- *cultural hybridity*: linguistic, literary, cultural, ideological, political and other borderlines rarely coincide, which really makes it impossible in any single case neatly to define and distinguish



“source system” and ‘target system’ in terms of distinct and coherent entities (e.g. nations); in many cases source system and target system interpenetrate each other to the point of becoming indistinguishable (e.g. translation between Spanish and English in Puerto Rico).

These ideas undoubtedly help us to obtain a more sophisticated understanding of what happens and what is at stake in the translating of Shakespeare. Take the last factor in the list above: cultural hybridity. If one considers the case of the recent translations of *Macbeth* into Scots, how could one distinguish here between “source culture” and “target culture”? Similarly, for the larger part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the worldwide reception of Shakespeare in most cases passed via French, German or Italian intertexts, invalidating the romantic notion of the heritage England of Elizabeth I being the “source culture” of Shakespearean translation. As we shall demonstrate in the rest of this essay, more is to be lost than gained by framing translation within nation-bound or language-bound perspectives, which make you study Shakespeare’s reception into the Low Countries, into France, into Germany, or elsewhere, in terms of independent or autonomous traditions. A broadly European perspective, indeed a worldwide perspective, turns out to far more helpful. Also, it is obvious from the beginning that much of the history of Shakespeare’s way into the Low Countries will simply slip through the historians’ fingers if they are not willing to jettison all their current prejudices and expectations about translation, adopting a very flexible translation concept instead.

The overseas reception of Shakespeare was inaugurated by the so-called ‘English comedians’ or ‘strolling players’, who, during Shakespeare’s lifetime and afterwards, brought simplified versions of Shakespearean and other English plays to continental Europe’s stages. They performed in the Low Countries, but also moved further to the North and the East (Germany, Poland, Scandinavia). Per-

performances were initially in English, which was a most obscure language to the majority of spectators, so that recourse had to be had to visual and theatrical means (mime, body language, lively stage business) to generate interest and excitement. But it appears that forms of collaboration with local actors soon developed, which presumably led to bilingual performances and/or early forms of translation. It is in the milieu of these strolling players that *De Dolle Bruyloft* ('the mad wedding', 1654) was written, Abraham Sybant's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*: for all we know, this was the first published translation of a Shakespeare play in Dutch and as such possibly even a European first. Ton Hoenselaars and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen have suggested that the Dutch translation may have led to further German adaptations, which once again introduces the European dimension.<sup>5</sup>

However, the rather rudimentary versions of the English comedians failed to gain a foothold within the canonised literary and theatrical circles of Holland's Golden Age. An exception was the popular but controversial play *Aran en Titus* by Jan Vos (1641), which is indirectly related to *Titus Andronicus*. The success of Vos played a role in the foundation in 1669 of the influential poetic society *Nil Volentibus Arduum*, which recommended the strict rules of French classicism as an urgently needed remedy against the lack of taste and the general flouting of decorum and discipline displayed by the likes of Jan Vos.

French classicism was actually to determine much of the international reception of Shakespeare for the two centuries to follow. As is well-known, the esthetic and ideological dogmas of French classicism had a huge impact on cultural life in Europe for the later seventeenth, the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries. Indeed, to a very considerable extent, the translation and reception of

<sup>5</sup> See Ton Hoenselaars and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, "Abraham Sybant Tames *The Taming of the Shrew* for the Amsterdam Stage (1654)," in *Accents Now Known: Shakespeare's Drama in Translation*, edited by José Roberto O'Shea, special issue of *Ilha do Desterro* 36 (1999), 53-70.

Shakespeare during this long period can be analyzed in terms of two strongly opposed mechanisms: on the one hand, the condemnation and partial recuperation of Shakespeare by the dominant neoclassical poetics; on the other hand, the development and growing influence of various anti-classical poetic models – later dubbed ‘preromantic’ and ‘romantic’ – which hailed Shakespeare as a leader and an archetype in the struggle of various national cultures to emancipate themselves from the straitjacket of French culture.<sup>6</sup>

The dominance of the neoclassical model and the growing resistance to it explain why Shakespeare’s tragedies especially were translated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: within the neo-classical paradigm the tragedy occupied a position at the top of the hierarchy of genres. The comedies and, even more so, the history plays were overshadowed by them and remained so for a long time. The *Sonnets* were ignored by translators until the nineteenth century; in some countries translations of the *Sonnets* weren’t forthcoming until the twentieth century.

It is a well-known fact that Shakespeare’s work combines the classical models with ingredients from the popular traditions: consider the mingling of tragedy and comedy and of prose and verse, the flouting of the conventional rules of decorum and the three unities, the presence of spectres, cruelties and spectacular stage action, the stylistic obscurities, the often anarchic metaphors and puns, and so on. These features were of course diametrically opposed to the requirements of the neoclassical esthetic. Voltaire’s fulminating remarks

<sup>6</sup> For detailed discussions of this process, the reader may wish to consult: *Das Shakespeare-Bild in Europa zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik*, edited by Roger Bauer, Michael de Graat and Jürgen Wertheimer (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988); *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, edited by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D’huylst (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1993); *The Reception of Shakespeare in Eighteenth-Century France and Germany*, edited by Kenneth E. Larson and Hansjoerg R. Schelle, special issue (vol. 15, nr. 2) of *Michigan Germanic Studies* (1989); Marion Monaco, *Shakespeare on the French Stage in the XVIIIth Century* (Paris: Didier, 1974).

on Shakespeare speak volumes. Given this context, it would have been unthinkable to perform Shakespeare on Europe's stages without comprehensive revision. This is indeed the tactic followed in the free adaptations by Voltaire himself, or in those by Jean-François Ducis, who inherited Voltaire's seat in the *Académie française*. Ducis, whose ignorance of English notoriously obliged him to work from existing French versions, wrote five Shakespearean plays: *Hamlet* (1769), *Roméo et Juliette* (1773), *Le Roi Lear* (1783), *Macbeth* (1784) and *Othello* (1792). These versions soon conquered much of the Western world and its colonial extensions. They were performed in French or in further translations in the Low Countries, but also in Italy, Spain, Portugal, South America, Poland, Russia, Turkey, and so on. Ducis' *Hamlet* was actually translated twice into Dutch: by M. G. Cambon van der Werken (1777) and by Ambrosius Justus Zubli (1786). Performances based on Ducis versions in the Low countries went on until well into the nineteenth century.

Incidentally, we should keep in mind that English theatregoers in the eighteenth century had no access either to the "unadulterated" or "Elizabethan" Shakespeare. Shakespearean productions in the Age of Reason usually involved a thorough sanitising of language, plot and character in a way which closely resembled the rewriting procedures current on the Continent.<sup>7</sup> Translation is often necessary to overcome a linguistic comprehension barrier, but the striking analogies between the *intralingual* rewritings of Shakespeare for the English stage and the *interlingual* ones for foreign stages should make us pause and put the linguistic factor into its proper perspective. It is also worth pointing out that Voltaire and Ducis (and their followers) were not quite the backward-looking reactionaries that they are often taken for. Their Shakespearean plays did come much closer to the model of

<sup>7</sup> This episode in the stage history of Shakespeare is well documented. *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, edited by Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) includes a number of more recent examples as well, and offers an excellent bibliography.

the orthodox French tragedy than the originals, but they also got some innovating Shakespearean elements injected into them – action, movement, excitement – even if this happened within the safe borderlines of their esthetic paradigm.

In the meantime, certain cultural developments in the eighteenth century were increasingly putting the French cultural supremacy and the neoclassical paradigm under pressure. This happened in England and somewhat later on the Continent, where anglophilia was spreading fast. Within the literary domain, the following movements and genres rose into prominence: sentimentalism, the gothic novel, Ossianic poetry, the historical novel, and, indeed, the Shakespeare revival (with David Garrick, among others). But the philosophical and esthetic theories developed in the context of the German *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) too were instrumental in questioning and challenging the tenets of neoclassicism (Lessing, Herder).

The continent had gradually begun to know Shakespeare through translations of the English spectatorial magazines and novels (Richardson, Fielding, Walpole), but also, ironically, through Voltaire's comments in which qualified admiration increasingly gave way to caustic condemnation (from the *Lettres philosophiques* of 1734 onwards). This growing interest in the Bard resulted in some early translation efforts: like *Théâtre Anglois* (1746-1749) by Pierre-Antoine de La Place in France, or the German *Julius Caesar* (1741) by C. W. von Borck. Being better known, Shakespeare was increasingly recognised as a natural genius and a potential leader for all the anti-classical forces to rally around. This fuelled the demand for further translations, and so on, until the snowball got rolling. Especially in Germany the Shakespeare cult gathered strong momentum (as in the *Sturm und Drang* movement), borrowing much of its energy from the nationalistic élan which powered its search for theatrical and esthetic innovation. Shakespeare was a model in Germany's effort to build a truly national theatrical tradition. The same was soon to happen in many other cultures.

The demand for reliable translations – more reliable at any rate

than those by Ducis and the other adapters – was met, among others, by Pierre Le Tourneur (1776-1783) in France and, in two successive stages, by Chr. M. Wieland (1762-1766) and J. J. Eschenburg (1775-1782) in Germany. These translations provided the blueprint for Shakespeare translations of the philological type: in principle, they provided the full text, properly introduced and annotated, rendered in prose, and thus earmarked for reading rather than for performance. Interestingly, at this stage, the artistically conservative translations held the stage, whereas the experiments with new ways of translating and representing Shakespeare happened within the more private sphere of the reading cabinet. This was to change in later periods. Today, experiments in Shakespearean translation are usually carried out on the stage before reaching print, if they are published at all.

The German Eschenburg edition inspired the Amsterdam-based publisher Albrecht Borchers in 1778 to envisage the project for the first ever complete Dutch edition of the plays. Three volumes – containing three plays each – were rendered by anonymous translators who worked from Eschenburg's German text. The following two volumes were translated by Bernardus Brunius (Holland's first translator of Laurence Sterne), who also consulted Eschenburg but mainly took the English editions as his source. The Borchers project appears to be typical in two respects. It shows that the German experiments with new modes of Shakespearean translation were recognised as authoritative and inspiring sources for possible alternatives to French neoclassicism. At the same time, the case shows that French culture still had a strong hold on the literary life of the Low Countries, since in 1782, before the project had got halfway, it was abandoned, apparently for lack of interest and commercial success.

In the following decades, the French adaptations and translations continued to circulate in the Low Countries. New attempts to render Shakespeare into Dutch were on the whole few and far between, but interesting efforts were made by Jurriaan Moulin, Philippus Pieter Roorda van Eysinga, and especially Abraham Seyne Kok. Kok (to whom we also owe the first Dutch *Divina Commedia*) managed in the

course of the 1860s to translate for the first time in the language the complete dramatic works of Shakespeare. But none of these translators met with much critical acclaim or popular success. The main reason for this may well be the tepidity of the Romantic movement in the Low Countries: the cult of individual expression, of strong emotion and free imagination, which in other cultures had created such a favourable climate for the reception of Shakespeare, never quite gained a foothold. The Low Countries knew a more tempered, rationalised and moralistic brand of Romanticism, which found its historical inspiration in Holland's own Golden Age and not in the foreign and unbridled genius of Shakespeare. Only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the time ripe for an enthusiastic response to Shakespeare. This was a period of innovation and change in many cultural domains; think, for example, of the so-called *Tachtigers* (writers of the Eighties Movement) in the area of poetic expression. This period produced the great Burgersdijk version (1877-1885), which is Holland's closest approximation of a "classic" Shakespeare translation so far and which, according to some commentators, remains unsurpassed to this day, despite its now antiquated language.

In other parts of Europe the struggle between neoclassicism and Romanticism had been more vigorous. In France, it produced, albeit with some delay, the complete prose version by François-Victor Hugo (1859-1866). In Germany, it gave rise to the famous Schlegel-Tieck translation (1797-1833), which is possibly the ultimate Romantic translation. It is based on the notion that the work of art is an indivisible structure, in which form and content have fully merged into a strictly unique organism, which springs from the creative powers of the author and is therefore beyond and above any external system of rules (such as that of neoclassicism). Other than the prose translators – and, of course, other than the adapters in the Ducis line – the true Romantic translator has to aim for an integral rendering that recreates this organism in the receiving language. This requires relentless

attention to form (e.g. Shakespeare's prosodic modulations) as well as to content. Closer scrutiny brings to light that Schlegel and Tieck and their fellow translators Dorothea Tieck and Count Wolf von Baudissin did not always live up to their own ideals, but this does not seem to have prevented them from inspiring German translators to this day.

In the Low Countries, too, the Schlegel-Tieck model turned out to be very inspirational. Thus, all the complete Shakespeare editions in Dutch which came out after Kok's (which is predominantly in prose) can be situated in the same tradition: the 1877-1885 edition by L. A. J. Burgersdijk; the 1955-1963 revision of Burgersdijk by Cees Buddingh'; and the 1967-1971 edition by Willy Courteaux. In these translations one can very occasionally observe traces of direct textual borrowings from the great German example, but the influence of Schlegel-Tieck situates itself on a more general plane, in the fact that it has established itself as a type or a blueprint for what a Shakespeare translation can and should look like:

- it should be source-text oriented;
- it should attempt to reproduce the prosodic features of the original;
- it ought to avoid the *page/stage* dilemma (do you translate for the reader or for the stage?) by aiming for an 'integral' rendition (which of necessity brings about a perfect compromise between actability and philological orthodoxy).

Allowing for a number of variations, these basic options also characterise the two projects for a complete translation which are currently underway in Holland: those by Gerrit Komrij and by Jan Jonk. And, again allowing for individual variations, it is fair to say that most twentieth-century translators who rendered only one or just a few plays operated within the paradigm set by Schlegel and Tieck: Jacobus van Looy, Edward B. Koster, Adriaan Roland Holst, Martinus Nijhoff, Jeroom Decroos, Emiel Fleerackers, J. W. F. Werumeus



Buning, Nico van Suchtelen, Gerard den Brabander, Michel van der Plas, Bert Voeten, Hans Andreus, Evert Straat, Dolf Verspoor, Pé Hawinkels, and many more. This situation has to be assessed against the background of several other European cultures in which the translation of Shakespeare is traditionally defined in terms of a double dualism:

- translations are either entirely in prose or entirely in verse;
- translations are intended either for the stage, or for the reader and the student.

These dual distinctions have traditionally been very much present in the Romance language translation cultures. Translators such as Jean-Michel Déprats (France) and Angel-Luis Pujante (Spain) are now making significant efforts to overcome them.

We might furthermore attempt the following generalisations about the international patterns of Shakespearean translation in the last century or so:

- *intensification*: Shakespeare has meanwhile acquired a unique canonised status as a universal literary genius, which has led to an unstoppable flow of new translations worldwide;
- *politicisation*: Shakespeare continues to be used for a range of political purposes: consider his use by hegemonic cultures as a means towards esthetic and ideological containment (e.g. Shakespeare in the former British Empire), or by marginal cultures which are often keen to enlist him in the service of their emancipatory cause (Shakespeare in Quebec, in Catalonia, or in post-colonial contexts);
- *professionalisation*: Shakespeare translators today have easy access to more adequate source text editions than their predecessors and to the most recent advances in Shakespearean scholarship; an in-

creasing number of translators have actually received a professional training as Anglicists;

- *liberalisation*: society's greater permissiveness in the areas of sexuality and violence has given translators and theatre directors from the 1960s onwards a higher degree of expressive freedom;
- *mediatisation*: new media and technologies (surtitles in theatres, film, television, internet, DVD, hypertext) have created new needs as well as opportunities for new modes of translation, which may in the long run be expected to rub off on our concept of 'normal' translation for the page and/or the stage;
- *individualisation*: Shakespeare translators in the twentieth century have on the whole been less subject than their predecessors to pressures that concerned entire periods, genres, or esthetic systems. In other words, Shakespeare translators seem to be operating less on the basis of some or other collective agenda, and more as individuals whose wish to enter the lists against the master from Stratford and/or against his earlier translators springs from a personal motivation.

This last point, however, probably needs to be strongly qualified when we attend to the Shakespeare translations of the last two decades or so, both in the Low Countries and in the wider international picture. As far as the Low Countries are concerned, I am referring to the recent, rather daring experiments in Shakespearean translation by authors such as Hugo Claus, Jan Decorte, and Tom Lanoye. My point is that it may no longer do to treat their versions as individual, experimental, or even eccentric translational responses to Shakespeare. It might well be more appropriate to construe their translations/adaptations as exponents of a new model of translation that is gradually taking shape in the public sphere, as exponents of an alternative paradigm for the cross-language representation of Shakespeare. For want of a better term, we might call it the postmodern model of Shakespeare translation.

It remains a challenge for the twenty-first century to examine to what extent the free translation modes just referred to are also applied by Dutch translators outside the domain of Shakespearean translation, and if so, in which areas exactly, and what connections can be established between them. What is obvious, however, is that similar instances of manipulative Shakespeare translation can be found in the international avant-garde abroad. Think of the so-called *tradaptations* by Michel Garneau and his followers in Quebec, the experimental *Ambleto* (1972) and *Macbetto* (1974) by Giovanni Testori in Italy, or the so-called cannibalising renderings of Shakespeare in Brazil by Augusto Boal (*A Tempestade*, 1979) or the Grupo Galpão (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1982).

The exact historical and typological connections between all these postmodern rewritings need to be assessed in greater detail before we start using terms such as “trend” or “movement.” Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the postmodern Shakespeare rewriters we have in mind reject the basic axioms that the mainstream of Dutch Shakespeare translators – from Burgersdijk to Komrij and Jonk – are implicitly or explicitly based on. According to these axioms, the original work of art has an inner cohesion, and the translator’s task is to reproduce that inner cohesion as fully as possible to achieve equivalence. The postmodern translators systematically challenge the notion of textual cohesion, and the conventional logical and narrative patterns which it implies. Consider the following features of their work:

- their deliberate use of anachronism;
- the eclectic approach towards language, style/register and genre;
- the juxtaposition of different translation techniques (ranging from hyperliteralism, or even non-translation, to free adaptation);
- the predilection for free verbal association and punning.

The different translators of the postmodern generation show these features in different degrees and configurations, but the result is invariably that the translation exhibits its own textuality and highlights the transformative nature of its intervention as a translation. By the same token, it rejects the traditional ethics of translation, which is based on notions such as fidelity, submissiveness, authenticity, invisibility, equivalence, and on a general belief in the controllability and reproducibility of meanings.

What is striking is the simultaneous co-existence of different modes and types of Shakespearean translation. Besides the newer versions which reflect postmodern sensibilities, many of today's translators continue to work along more traditional lines. And the older translations have not vanished but are still very much around, some more prominently so than others: for example, they may be re-printed, used as a textual basis for a performance, or consulted if not plundered by later translators; or they may simply continue to be present in libraries and private collections, on videotapes, or in our memories. This plurality is normal and a sign of culture's vitality. If we all subscribe to the truism that culture is a hugely complex phenomenon – think of oppositions such as highbrow/lowbrow, oral/written, art/entertainment, tradition/production, or import/export, and think of the presence of different genres and media, and the interactions between them – there is no reason to wonder at the fact that these complexities are reflected by the divergence that characterises the field of Shakespearean rewritings. As a translator, one is likely to identify with the specific positions one has adopted within that field; as a scholar, one's task is to suspend all value judgements and to get a better understanding of the complexity of the entire field.

One thing that you notice from this detached position is that – despite appearances – the relationship that obtains between strongly opposed translation methods is really a symbiotic one. In functional terms, the “postmodern” versions of (say) Tom Lanoye and the more conventional, “philological” translations of (say) Jan Jonk are not only complementary, but they positively depend on one another. The

moment of subversion and transformation that characterises Lanoye's versions can only be perceived and understood for what it is against the backdrop of conventional translations such as those by Jonk, which by their striving for philological orthodoxy manage to call up at least an image of the Elizabethan originals. Conversely, contemporary acculturations such as those by Lanoye create a link between philologically-oriented efforts and the concerns of modern culture and thus help them to obtain what is due to them: a reasonable share of success both in commercial terms and in terms of their reader's imaginative participation. Neither of the two types of translation should be taken for the real Shakespeare, of course. The smallest footnote in our English Shakespeare editions should suffice to dispel that illusion.

# **“If it be now”: The Knocking of Fate**

## **Reading Shakespeare for Translation**

Maik Hamburger

There have been many attempts to characterize the specifics of dramatic speech, and the difficulty for a translator, when delving too deeply in the theory of what he is doing, is that like the legendary centipede he becomes too self-conscious to move a leg at all. He will prefer vague but evocative descriptions of performative speech like Pirandello's *azione parlata* or Artaud's *une poésie dans l'espace*. An essential step in translating speech designed to be spoken by actors is to regard it as an actor or a director might, to sound its potentialities for physical action on the stage. This does not just mean running about or fighting or gesticulating; it encompasses all the signals that an actor's body may be sending out as a signifier, some of which can be most subtle indeed. I still find the most useful term for this physical quality is Bertolt Brecht's notion of “*Gestus*,” anglicised as *gestus*. By *gestus* Brecht means the sum of codes for physical action contained in dramatic lines. Like speech itself it is too complex for detailed analysis, but Brecht explains the term with the help of a quotation from the Bible. He writes:

The sentence ... “pluck out the eye that offends thee” has an underlying *gestus* of a command, but this is not expressed in a pure gestic manner, since “that offends thee” has another *gestus* which is not expressed, namely that of a motivation. Gestically expressed, the sentence reads (and Luther who “took speech from the lips of com-

mon people”) shapes it thus: “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out!” One can see at a glance that this wording is gestically much richer and purer. The first part contains an assumption, whose special quality can be fully expressed in the intonation. Then there is a short pause of perplexity and only then the surprising advice.<sup>1</sup>

Incidentally this quotation is itself illustrative of cultures nurtured by translation: obviously Brecht’s original is in German, it is quoting Luther’s German translation from the Greek of the New Testament; my English translation quotes Tyndale’s translation which happens to carry the same gestic quality as Luther’s. Actually this is not such a great coincidence, as both translators were just being faithful to the Greek original which already exhibits the same sentence structure. Tyndale is furthermore known to have consulted Luther on questions of translation, although the story of their desks standing side by side at Wartburg Castle as they worked on the New Testament has not been substantiated.<sup>2</sup>

One of the many factors determining the gestic meaning of a passage, a verbal exchange or a soliloquy, is, of course, its rhythm. Behind Shakespeare’s verse there are several metronomes in operation that provide the beat of the verse, take into account the breathing rhythm of the actor, determine the rate at which batches of information are presented, and control the phases of emotional crescendo and diminuendo. Each of the metronomes is moreover continually changing its beat and intensity and each is in constant interaction with the others. The translator should, like the actor, try to attune his ear to these rhythmic properties. We know that when a performance captivates its audience the whole house breathes as one body in time with the actors.

<sup>1</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Werner Hecht, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), vol. 2, 163f (my translation).

<sup>2</sup> Privately communicated to the author by Klaus Reichert.

Now different languages do have differing internal rhythms, but reference to stage action can to some extent reestablish a rhythmical correspondence. German words are certainly longer than English ones, but until cultural anthropologists prove the contrary I will assume a German audience does not think or grasp a stage event more slowly than an English one. Duration is certainly part of the meaning of performance and if a passage or a whole play runs longer than the original, an element of the playwright's vision is distorted. The flow of the action is bound to the rhythmic flow of the actor's speech, which itself coordinates with the rhythm of breathing. A tendency to expansion seems to adhere to all translations irrespective of language. The first English translation of *Faust* (by Dr. John Anster) exceeds Goethe's text by about one seventh, and H. G. Carlson complained that a play running two hours in the original French might run two and three-quarter hours, or even longer, in English.<sup>3</sup> As George Steiner puts it,

the mechanics of translation are primarily explicative, they explicate (or, strictly speaking 'explicitate') and make graphic as much as they can of the semantic inherence of the original. [...] Because explication is additive, because it does not merely restate the original unit but must create for it an illustrative context, a field of actualized and perceptible ramifications, translations are inflationary.<sup>4</sup>

An inflation of that kind would be detrimental to a dramatic text. The translator has to apprehend the lines including their pointers for physical communication; and what Steiner calls the "illustrative context" and the "perceptible ramifications" are not *additive* to the text but are contained *in* it by its gestic connotations which transform into physical stage action.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Snell-Hornby *et al.*, *Handbuch Translation* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), 256.

<sup>4</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 277.



I would like to give here a few examples of what might be called a stage-related close reading of the text arising from my work on *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

When Hamlet says "O that this too too solid flesh would melt," the syncopated stress on "too too" indicates a double-pounding *gestus* directed at the actor's own body (whether the *gesture* is actually performed on stage is immaterial: the *gestus* is there and it is *not* synonymous with *gesture*).<sup>5</sup> An adequate form has to be found in the target language; you can't add a stage direction saying "he beats his breast," nor can you explain why the speaker seems to experience a revulsion towards his own flesh, which would already be an interpretation. But the implications contained in the linguistic form become clear if you make a slight alteration which does not change the overt meaning of the words: "O that this much too solid flesh would melt." How feeble the line now sounds! There is no force in it – try to speak it powerfully, it will make you wince. The speaking apparatus balks at the blurred *gestus*. One perceives that the classic German version of A. W. Schlegel – "O schmelze doch dies allzu feste Fleisch" – while sounding quite poetic, is inadequate. The version worked out by the director Adolf Dresen and myself reads: "O daß dies sture sture Fleisch zerginge." This rendering saves the double beat and the hollow echoing "oo" sound while losing the syncopation. The adjective "stur" which means "stolid" or "stubborn," or what the Scots call "dour," would not pass a test for literalness; but it gives the German actor the kind of material the English has. The liberty taken may partially be excused in view of editorial uncertainty as to whether Shakespeare actually wrote "solid" or "sullied." A total contrast to this fleshy pounding line is Hamlet's exclamation on seeing his father's ghost: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us" (1.4.20). Even someone unacquainted with the

<sup>5</sup> *Hamlet* in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.2.129. Further references to the play will be to this edition.

language would sense the light, sibilant quality of this line. Like many textual elements this translates quite simply once its significance has been grasped.

Here is a passage in which a single word seems to convey a significant attitude. It is a prose dialogue between Claudius and Hamlet, the latter just having killed Polonius and now being interrogated by the King.

KING CLAUDIUS: Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET: At supper.

KING CLAUDIUS: At supper? Where?

HAMLET: Not where he eats, but where a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.

(4.3.17-21)

Consider the incredible impertinence of the line "At supper." It is doubly irreverent: to the dead Polonius and to the King. The *gestus* of disrespect, of flippancy, of insolence is given by the connotation and the sound of the word. Now any German word I know for an evening meal is more formal and lacks this throw-away sound: "Abendbrot," "Abendessen," "Abendmahl." To retain this flippant throw-away *gestus*, I had to use the German word "Frühstück," which actually means "breakfast":

KING: Nun Hamlet, wo ist Polonius?

HAMLET: Beim Frühstück.

KING: Beim Frühstück? Wo?

HAMLET: Nicht wo er ißt, wo er gegessen wird.

Of course I realize that some layers of meaning get lost. The association to the Last Supper is no longer present. But I think this association would be very faint, if existent at all, in a production in this context. Editorial notes can be helpful to a translator but explication should not be urged at the expense of stage relevance.

I came across an interesting item in the diaries of Peter Hall, the

former Head of RSC and then of the National Theatre in the seventies. The entry refers to his directing a play by Harold Pinter in Vienna, so in a foreign language. He writes:

An interesting thing comes from rehearsing *Old Times* here. When the actor's *intention* is right, the inflection is virtually the same in German as in English. How can this be? There is a human truth which transcends language and is the one thing common to all humanity. This is why we can understand plays in languages that we are ignorant of – always assuming the work is sufficiently realised to reveal the truth.<sup>6</sup>

I don't intend to go into the philosophy of this but I would tender the more prosaic suggestion that what Hall refers to as the "human truth which transcends language" is indeed the *gestic* meaning of a text which does cross the language barrier when the actor's intention is right, as well as the text.

A constant measure of time in Shakespeare is provided by the iambic pentameter. German translators are more fortunate than those of many other countries in that their language permits the use of blank verse. This advantage is set back by German not really being an iambic language. It is, in fact, more dactylic, and many words fit better into a waltz rhythm, like "Brudermord," "Dämmerung," "Schauspieler," and "Arbeiter." Nevertheless, it is an enormous help to be able to reproduce, approximately, the meaningful way Shakespeare handles his verse. Translators forced to transpose the metric form have to be extremely inventive to find an adequate equivalent for their actors. If you are translating into blank verse, you know you are exceeding your length if you require more lines than the original. The verse is also a good measure for the building up of tension. Consider the following passage in which Claudius is telling Hamlet not to exaggerate his mourning for his father:

<sup>6</sup> *Peter Hall's Diaries: The Story of a Dramatic Battle*, edited by John Goodwin (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1983), 10 (13 June 1972).

Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,  
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
To reason most absurd, whose common theme  
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried  
From the first corpse till he that died today,  
"This must be so." We pray you throw to earth  
This unprevailing woe, and think of us  
As of a father.

(1.2.101-108)

You notice how the structure of the verse does three quarters of the actor's job for him. It builds up the rhetorical force line by line to come to a climax with "This must be so" to drive home the inevitability of old Hamlet's death, then follows up with the suggestive offer to stand in as father himself. In German, this can be followed faithfully if you are aware of the priorities of a theatrical text. This very obvious example of verse contributing essentially to the meaning of a passage may be taken as a clue for less striking and subtler uses of blank verse.

Occasionally Shakespeare has an incomplete verse which is often welcomed by translators as an opportunity to expand. But again one should look out for the meaning of the blank spaces. In the first scene of *Hamlet* the Ghost appears to the sentinels, who try to speak to him. As he vanishes without a word, Marcellus says: "'Tis gone and will not answer" (1.1.50). The speech is laconically brief, the rest of the line is blank. There is a matter-of-factness there, maybe a touch of disappointment, emphasized by the break in metre. An interval of two iambs occurs, a bewildered pause in which the scholar Horatio should comment, but doesn't, so that Barnardo turns to him to say: "How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale ..." (1.1.51). Here Schlegel has an excellent solution: "Fort ist's und will nicht reden." If you try to save the verb "answer" you have to struggle with the dactylic, trisyllabic word, "antworten," and will inevitably get into trouble. J. H. Voß, a contemporary of Schlegel, has "Schon fort; antworten will's nicht." This preserves the verb, but at the price of



Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke!

(1.1.20)

Here indeed is a clumsy, forced entrance line. Its rhythm is flawed. It begins awkwardly with a trochee instead of an iamb: Egeus enters court – metrically, metaphorically, and physically speaking – on the wrong foot! Without any more ceremony Egeus erupts as follows:

Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.

(1.1.22-23)

The striking feature here is the inversion in the first line. The anteposed adverbial qualification stresses the self-centredness of a man unceremoniously bursting upon a court with nothing but his grievance in his mind. He is so charged with emotion that he oversteps the rules of ceremony. The a-rhythmical entrance line and the inversion in the second line provide cumulative material for the actor’s performance. The *gestus* is that of Egeus stumbling in and throwing his vexation like a challenge into the ring.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with its regular, end-stopped, rhyme-bound text, metrical deviation deserves particularly close scrutiny. Thus Puck breaks off his bantering conversation with a fairy to announce the coming of his master:

But room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

(2.1.58)

It would have been easy for Shakespeare, as it is for translators, to regularize the metre (“But room there, fairy!”). As it stands, spread over two syllables, the word “room” provides, in effect, a stage direction within the text. Particularly with our experience of the reconstructed London Globe in mind, can we see the circular sweeping gesture of Puck’s arm as he orders the Fairy to stand back.

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is composed of a mixture of prose, blank

verse, rhymed couplets, and other verse forms. What is the meaning when one form switches to another? For instance: when does the first *rhyme* in the play occur? It is, in fact, spoken by Hermia, and it appears unheralded in the middle of a passage. Hermia says to her lover:

My good Lysander,  
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,  
By his best arrow with the golden head,  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves ...

(1.1.168-72)

And from then on the speech is rhymed. The Cupid theme is built up, and on the decisive word "loves" the blank verse changes into heroic couplets with their heightened emotional temperature. The rhyme is in this context a stylistic elevation and at the same time a throw-back to older love-lore in pre-Shakespearean drama and folk-song. If a translator for some reason cannot employ this device, he has to invent some other way of marking out this point in the play.

To come back to Hamlet: his line "To be, or not to be; that is the question" (3.1.58) being the opening verse of a soliloquy, would be expected to establish the metrical pattern of the passage. In fact it also contains a metrical irregularity which the composer of Q1 tries to smooth out by writing "To be or not to be, ay that's the question," a ruinous distortion of the *gestus* which has unfortunately been followed up by many German translators to whom it seems intolerable not to have a pure metre:

"Sein oder Nichtsein, das ist hier die Frage" (August Wilhelm Schlegel)

"Sein oder Nichtsein, ja, das ist die Frage" (Theodor Fontane)

"Sein oder Nichtsein dann, das ist die Frage" (Erich Fried)

The *general sound* of a passage may have gestic meaning as well. There was a curious incident during the *Hamlet* translation with director

Adolf Dresen. We had got down the Ghost’s speech in Act 1 in what seemed an adequate manner. We were ready to go on but I demurred. I felt dissatisfied, something seemed wrong. After quite a while I was able to tell Dresen, who was waiting impatiently to get the scene wrapped up, that in English the Ghost seemed to be speaking in a deeper voice than in our German. We then perceived that there was a predominance of dark vowels, U’s and O’s, in the Ghost’s lines. When the German passage was reworked with this in mind, we *did* get a satisfactory correspondence.

Occasionally, translators don’t seem to trust their eyes when perusing a Shakespeare play. When Hamlet has killed Polonius and is getting rid of the corpse, there is no doubt he says: “I’ll lug the guts into the neighbour room” (3.4.186). Now, this is extremely coarse, even if one concedes that it may not have sounded quite so gross in Elizabethan usage as it does today. There is no excuse to make this more genteel, as almost every translator has done to this day, and I have compared German, French, Russian, and Polish translations. In the same way, when Hamlet speaks to Ophelia about “lying between a maid’s legs” and asks “Do you think I meant country matters?” (3.2.111) there is no reason today to bypass the quibble on a well-known four-letter word.

One has to be careful not to level out the heights or the depths of Shakespeare. As a contrast to the above bit of bawdy let us consider one of the most moving passages in the play. It is Horatio’s farewell to dying Hamlet:

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

(5.2.311-12)

The poetry of these lines is heightened by the fact that this is the *first* time Hamlet is addressed as “prince.” Never before does the word occur in the play. At the end of the tragedy, when the hero dies and all seems lost, this new expression “sweet prince” flashes out, pure,



untarnished, shining like a freshly minted coin. It establishes Hamlet's gentleness and his royalty at the moment of his death. Its illustrious ring would be lost if the word had been bandied about throughout the five acts of the play. A translator would do well to husband his vocabulary in such a way as to retain the freshness of key words.

Finally let us consider a short prose passage marking a point of no return. The asymmetry between intent and deed is a fundamental theme of the tragedy. Time and again Hamlet tries to spur himself to action in vain, at other moments he acts unpremeditatedly and disastrously. He is torn between theory and practice: when theorizing he cannot act and when he does act his actions are divorced from theory. Finally he adopts non-action as a theory and decides to let destiny take its course. He cites the Bible, saying there is providence in the fall of a sparrow. And then he states:

If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now.  
If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all.

(5.2.166-68)

With these short staccato phrases Hamlet renounces his subjective possibilities of controlling events and gives himself up to the workings of fate. A rhythmic correspondence can be discerned to the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, often alluded to as "The Knock of Fate." Is this an echo of some archetypal rhythm common to humanity? I would be wary of making such a claim. But the rhythm is certainly there in Shakespeare's lines and as a heuristic analogy it can be significant to actors.

The exact nature of the non-verbal information contained in lines written for performance is, of course, just as much a matter of conjecture as is the precise meaning of the words. Often a translator has to make up his mind and abide by his decision. It is easier for the theatre to get over an occasional translator's misinterpretation than to stage a uniformly flaccid play text.

# Shakespeare's "Poem Unlimited"

## in Eighteenth-Century Spain

Isabel Verdaguer

The first Shakespeare play to be translated into Spanish was *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's "poem unlimited," a play, not constrained by any rules, and characterised by its variety as well as its continuous changes of action and language, was first translated in the eighteenth century, when the prevailing literary conventions in Spain were very different from those of the Elizabethans. Two translations of *Hamlet* were published during this period. *Hamleto, Rey de Dinamarca*, translated by Ramón de la Cruz in 1772, was not a direct, but a second-hand translation, based on Ducis's French adaptation, in line with the neo-classical canon.<sup>1</sup> The first Spanish translation of *Hamlet* done directly from English came to light in 1798: *Hamlet: Tragedia de Guillermo Shakespeare, Traducida é ilustrada con la vida del autor, y notas críticas por Inarco Celenio*. Inarco Celenio was the literary pseudonym of Leandro Fernández de Moratín, a Spanish neoclassical dramatist who lived in London from 1792 to 1793, where he first started to work on the

<sup>1</sup> *Hamleto, Rey de Dinamarca* was produced in Madrid in October 1772, without much success, and was not published until 1900 in *Revista Contemporánea*, vol. CXX. Indirect translations of Shakespeare's plays, based on French versions by Pierre-Antoine de la Place, Jean-François Ducis or Pierre Félicien le Tourneur, continued to appear in Spain in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

*Hamlet* translation.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, his stay in England was the outcome of his original intention to improve his knowledge of the French neoclassical theatre. His interest in French theatre had brought him to Paris, but, terrified by the events of the French revolution that he witnessed, he fled to London. "If the French had not been crazy, I would never have come to see Shakespeare's immortal works," he wrote to his friend Melón.<sup>3</sup> In London, his interest in Shakespeare and the English theatre grew despite his own neoclassical principles, and he decided to translate *Hamlet* into Spanish. Notably, though, he did not try to adapt the English Renaissance tragedy to the neoclassical conventions and norms of the late eighteenth century.

This essay seeks to analyze the interpretation and translation of an English Renaissance play by a neoclassical Spanish playwright from an early-twenty-first-century perspective. It will, therefore, be especially relevant to approach translation, in line with contemporary theory, not only as an interlingual but also as an intercultural activity, interrelating cultural and linguistic factors. The relationship of the translated text to the original will be explored within the framework of the literary system of the receiving culture, since nothing exists in a vacuum, and translations, as well as literary works, are inserted in a particular context which is likely to influence them. As a playwright, Moratín was deeply influenced by the neoclassical literary conventions. His prologue and notes amply reflect his adherence to neoclassicism. However, the decisions he took in the process of translation itself were not affected by his literary principles. He found in Shakespeare certain "defects which spoil and obscure its perfections" ("*defectos que manchan y oscurecen sus perfecciones*"), but he also

<sup>2</sup> There is evidence that he had finished his translation in 1794: in a letter from Italy to his friend Juan Antonio Melón dated August 1794 he wrote: "*¡Qué tragedia inglesa, intitulada Hamlet, tengo traducida de pies a cabeza!*" ("What an English tragedy, entitled *Hamlet*, I have translated from beginning to end!"). See Moratín, *Obras Póstumas*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1867), II, 146.

<sup>3</sup> Moratín, *Obras Póstumas*, II, 132.

reappreciated its beauty."<sup>4</sup> It testifies to Moratín's integrity that he allowed his deep respect for Shakespeare's text to prevail over the "defects" that he found in it, refusing to correct the latter.

Just as there are geographical, historical, cultural, literary, and linguistic factors that separate the original Shakespearean work from Moratín's late-eighteenth-century translation, there are also historical, cultural, and literary differences between Moratín's time and our own. Despite the fact that we cannot escape from our mental frame and our own sense of objectivity, I have tried to carry out my analysis and to provide an interpretation of the facts from an unbiased perspective. I have refrained from judging eighteenth-century points of view which do not coincide with ours. Instead, in order to account for the translation's characteristics, I have studied Moratín's translation in its immediate contexts. With the principles and criteria of our time, it will be difficult to agree with Moratín's comments, but I will contextualize these criteria and consider them in relation to Moratín's cultural and literary context and his own literary work.

Moratín's works as a playwright and critic of the theatre show his adherence to the literary principles of his time. It will be important, then, to distinguish not between the conventions of neoclassicism in Spain and those adopted by Moratín as an individual writer, since he was deeply influenced by the neoclassical precepts and values, but between Moratín as an artist and a sensitive individual on the one hand and Moratín as a critic and theoretician on the other.<sup>5</sup> And these two sides of his personality come together in his role as a translator of *Hamlet*, one reflected in the translation itself, and the other in the comments he added.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Shakespeare's drama, Moratín's own plays conformed to

<sup>4</sup> "Advertencia" ("Prólogo" to the 1798 edition). References in this paper are taken from *Obras de D. Leandro Fernández de Moratín, dadas á luz por la Real Academia de la Historia. Hamlet* (Madrid: por Aguado, Impresor de Cámara de S.M., 1830).

<sup>5</sup> Moratín wrote a book dealing with the origins of the Spanish theatre, *Orígenes del teatro español*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Carlo Rossi, *Leandro Fernández de Moratín* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1974).

neoclassical principles.<sup>7</sup> Moratín always adhered to the three classical unities of action, place, and time; he believed that the action must have dramatic verisimilitude, one episode following the previous one in a logical way; that the characters had to be credible and limited in number; that they had to speak in a clear, simple way appropriate to their condition; and that a play had to have a didactic purpose, censuring mistakes and vices, and teaching virtue. Yet, Moratín was fascinated by Shakespeare and *Hamlet*, and was capable of recognizing in him “an observing genius, a robust and bright understanding, an exquisite sensibility, a most fecund fantasy” (“*Su genio observador, su entendimiento despejado y robusto, su exquisita sensibilidad, su fantasía fecundísima*” [*Vida de Guillermo Shakespeare*])). Or, as he put it in the prologue to his *Hamlet* translation: “a grand, interesting, tragic action will be seen” (“*En esta obra se verá una acción grande, interesante, trágica*”).

In this prologue, Moratín also stated his concept of translation. He decided to present *Hamlet* “as it is, not adding defects to it or concealing the ones that can be found in the play” (“*la obligación que se impuso de presentarle como es en sí, no añadiéndole defectos, ni disimulando los que halló en su obra*”). Moratín presents himself here as a “modern” man: instead of adapting the play to the literary conventions of neoclassicism, he presented a complete and accurate text, adding no elements that were not in the original, omitting no elements that did not conform to the prevailing neoclassical principles.

The history of Shakespeare translations into Spanish reveals one clear tendency from the accuracy pole towards the adequacy pole. The earliest translations were heavily determined by the norms of the receiving culture, and consequently nearer the acceptability pole. The more modern a translation gets, the more likely it is to aim at reproducing the original text as accurately as possible. Against the background of this tendency, Moratín stands out because he tried, at such an early stage, to reproduce at least the content of the source

<sup>7</sup> Moratín wrote *El viejo y la niña*; *La mojigata*; *La comedia nueva o El café*; *El barón*; *El sí de las niñas*.

text closely, even the aspects that he did not like. Admittedly, as will be seen, the expressive or stylistic features of the original were not always preserved, but at a time when most translators tended to alter the original, Moratín did not attempt to adapt it to the expectations of the audience or readers of his time. The prevailing attitude is, perhaps, best illustrated by the fact that Moratín was respectful *vis-à-vis* the original text, while it was others who adapted Moratín's translation to make it conform to the literary conventions of neoclassicism. A case in point is Pablo Avelilla who in 1856 thought that it was "impossible to stage this tragedy with all the defects of the original, which Inarco Celenio so skilfully preserved" ("*Es imposible presentar dicha tragedia en escena con todos los defectos del original que tan diestramente conservó Inarco Celenio*").<sup>8</sup> Again in 1872, Moratín's *Hamlet* was adapted to the Spanish stage, and in order to do so, the translator followed Moratín's "wise meditations" ("*las juiciosas reflexiones*"), omitting what was "unconnected to the main action" ("*todo lo inconexo a la acción principal*").<sup>9</sup> According to Par, these adaptations of *Hamlet* were never performed.<sup>10</sup> Nor did Moratín see his translation on the stage, either.<sup>11</sup> When Moratín's collected works were published in 1825, the editor, Vicente González Arnao, wrote in the foreword:

<sup>8</sup> *Hamlet, drama en cinco actos, imitación de Shakespeare, por Don Pablo Avelilla* (Madrid: Imprenta de G. González, 1856). Quoted by Alfonso Par (1935: I, 199).

<sup>9</sup> "Para conseguir el fin que me proponía bastaba en mi concepto seguir las juiciosas reflexiones que aquél [Moratín] explana en sus notas, y ateniéndome a ellas he descartado todo lo inconexo a la acción principal." Advertencia preliminar. *Hamlet, arreglado al teatro español*, por M. M. y A. Habana. Madrid. 1872. Quoted by Alfonso Par, *Shakespeare en la Literatura Española*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1935), II, 32.

<sup>10</sup> See Alfonso Par, *Representaciones Shakespearianas en España*, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Biblioteca Balmes. Imprenta Octavio Viader, 1936).

<sup>11</sup> Except for *Julia y Romeo*, whose source was Le Tourneur's French translation, which the translator, M. García Suelto, further adapted to neoclassical conventions, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the source of all performances of Shakespeare's plays in Spain was Ducis's version: in 1772 Ramón de la Cruz's translation of *Hamlet* and in 1825 (or early 1826), José M. Carnerero's.

The translation of the tragedy of *Hamlet* (not done for Spanish theatres, where it would not be *tolerated*, but to give an idea of Shakespeare's dramatic talent, of its beauties and its defects) has been included in this collection, both for the merit of the Spanish version, and for the critical reflections that illustrate it, where the translator states his principles and opinions, with the great impartiality which characterizes all his works.

La traducción de la tragedia de Hamlet (no hecha para los teatros de España, donde no sería tolerable; sino para dar una idea del talento dramático de Shakespeare, de sus bellezas y de sus defectos) se ha incluido también en esta colección: así por el mérito de la versión española, como por las reflexiones críticas que la ilustran, en las cuales manifiesta el traductor sus principios y sus opiniones, con la imparcialidad estimable que caracteriza todas sus obras.<sup>12</sup>

Moratin's complete *Hamlet* was thus not expected to be staged, as it did not satisfy the demands of contemporary audiences.

Curiously, the concept of translation which Moratin applied to his version of *Hamlet* did not extend to his work on Molière, which he translated and freely adapted to the Spanish stage.<sup>13</sup> The Molière translations are much nearer the acceptability pole than the adequacy pole, adapted as they have been to the receiving culture. How can this contradiction be explained? Apart from his wish to present *Hamlet* to the Spanish public as Shakespeare wrote it, which obviously implied not altering it, he probably wished his translation to be different from the earlier French versions and Ramón de la Cruz's earlier translation into Spanish. There is evidence in Moratin's comments on *Hamlet* that he knew – and sometimes censured – the French translations by Pierre le Tourneur and Pierre Antoine de la Place. However, it is worth noting that in the 1798 edition of his *Hamlet* translation Moratin never explicitly mentions de la Cruz's

<sup>12</sup> Foreword to *Obras dramáticas y líricas de D. Leandro Fernández de Moratín*. Entre los Arcades de Roma, Inarco Celenio. Única edición reconocida por el autor, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprenta de Augusto Bobée, 1825), vii–viii (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup> Moratin also translated *L'École des maris* and *Le Médecin malgré lui*.

Spanish version of *Hamlet*. Only in his "Catálogo de piezas dramáticas publicadas en España desde el principio del siglo XVIII hasta la época presente" (1825), published in the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, does Moratín include an anonymous *Hamlet, Rey de Dinamarca*, to which the editors have added a note, wondering whether this was Ramón de la Cruz's translation of Jean-François Ducis's *Hamlet*.<sup>14</sup>

*Hamlet* was the only Shakespeare play translated by Moratín. It is curious indeed that as a comedy writer himself, he should have selected one of Shakespeare's tragedies. In the prologue to the translation Moratín justifies his selection. *Hamlet*, he states, "is one of the best of William Shakespeare's tragedies and the one most frequently staged in English theatres."<sup>15</sup> Although Cristobal Cladera challenged Moratín's statement, indicating that it was based on a misinterpretation, it is impossible to contest the popularity that *Hamlet* has always enjoyed.<sup>16</sup> However, even if Moratín mentions the frequent performances of *Hamlet* in London, and despite the fact that he often went to the theatre, there is no evidence – no record in his diary, in the *Apuntaciones sueltas de Inglaterra*, or in his letters – that he ever saw any production of *Hamlet*.

Although Moratín made Hamlet speak Spanish, he did not significantly alter the play's content. He changed the number of scenes on the page, marking the entrance of new characters. He also added many stage directions as footnotes in the 1798 edition, which were inserted in the text in later editions. Furthermore, Moratín made a few errors of interpretation, and the expressive qualities of Shake-

<sup>14</sup> "¿Será la traducción del Hamlet de Ducis, que hizo don Ramon de la Cruz dándole el nombre de Hamleto?", *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (8).

<sup>15</sup> "La presente Tragedia es una de las mejores de Guillermo Shakespeare, y la que con más frecuencia se representa en los teatros de Inglaterra."

<sup>16</sup> Cristobal Cladera criticized this translation in *Examen de la tragedia intitulada HAMLET, escrita en inglés por Guillermo Shakespeare y traducida al castellano por Inarco Clenio, poeta árcade* (Madrid: En la imprenta de la viuda Ibarra, 1800).



speare's text were not always fully conveyed.<sup>17</sup> He did not preserve Shakespeare's distinction between verse and prose, which he censured in a note. Also, the density of Shakespeare's language, its rhythm, and its music – so important in any translation of a dramatic text – are lost in Moratín's heavy Spanish prose.<sup>18</sup> As a neoclassical writer, he disliked Shakespeare's playful puns – especially those with sexual overtones – and often left them untranslated, or censured them.<sup>19</sup> Doublets and antithetical phrases, so characteristic of the play, are usually, but not always, kept in by Moratín.<sup>20</sup> But despite these shortcomings, he clearly respected Shakespeare's text, and his *Hamlet* is, therefore, much nearer the original source than most of the Shakespearean translations of that period. Apart from stage directions, he did not add anything else, and the omissions are scarce.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cladera (1800) pointed out Moratín's mistakes. For example, Moratín's rendering of "Ay, springes to catch woodcocks" (1.5.115) is "*¡Sí, esas son redes para coger codornices!*" (250).

<sup>18</sup> Spanish words and syntactic constructions are usually longer than English ones. But compare, for instance, Shakespeare's text: "'Tis strange" (1.1.63), and "*¡Extraña aparición es esta!*" (219), or "Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhouse'ld, disappointed, unanel'd" (1.5.76-77), and "*Perdí la vida cuando mi pecado estaba en todo su vigor, sin hallarme dispuesto para aquel trance, sin haber recibido el pan eucarístico, sin haber sonado el clamor de agonía*" (261), or "My lord, you once did love me" (3.2.337) and Moratín's translation: "*Señor, yo me acuerdo de que en otro tiempo me estimábais mucho*" (353).

<sup>19</sup> In V-5, for instance, Moratín says: "La obscuridad que se nota en este pasage nace de la varia significacion del verbo to lie: que unas veces es mentir y otras estar. De aquí resulta en el original un equívoco ridículo que no se ha podido conservar en la traduccion." ["The obscurity of this passage is due to the different meanings of the verb to lie (...) Hence a ridiculous pun results in the original, which cannot be kept in the translation."]

<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare's doublets are usually not cut down: "fear and wonder" (1.1.42) is in Moratín's translation "*miedo y asombro*" (218); "fair and warlike form" (1.1.45), "*presencia noble y guerrera*" (218); "strict and most observant watch" (1.1.70), "*guardias tan penosas y vigilantes*" (220). But "the motive and the cue for passion" (2.2.563) becomes in Spanish "*los tristes motivos de dolor*" (313-14).

<sup>21</sup> Among the few omissions, we can find Shakespeare's phrase "O, vengeance!" (2.2.584). Moratín also omitted "Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed" (3.4.166), and he left "that's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs" (3.2.113) untranslated in a note because "*cuya traduccion podria ofender la modestia de los lectores*" ["its translation could offend the readers' modesty"] (III-7).

Moratin admired Shakespeare and attempted to reproduce *Hamlet's* semantic content faithfully. However, his own views on the theatre were different from those of Shakespeare, due to their different historical, literary, and cultural backgrounds. And Moratin did express his objections to some passages of the play, as well as his pleasure with others, in the comments he wrote. The comments convey his opinion of the play and his ideas about the theatre, always from a neoclassical viewpoint. Always didactic, therefore, he leads the reader in his interpretation of the play, conveying his impressions, reflections, and ideas. Significantly, though, his explicitly neoclassical ideas did not affect his translation.

In the prologue and notes to his translation, and in his biography entitled *Vida de Guillermo Shakespeare* (which only appeared in the 1798 edition), Moratin stated his literary principles and his critical judgement of *Hamlet* according to these principles. On the main characteristics of a tragedy, Moratin stated: "the terrible passions which must enliven it, the great ideas it must have, the noble and robust expression corresponding to these passions, the unity of interest which must never die out..."<sup>22</sup> A tragedy, then, must contain great passions, as well as great ideas and thoughts with a didactic purpose, nobility of expression, and unity of interest. These are the guidelines that we find throughout Moratin's commentary.

Moratin wrote 122 miscellaneous notes for the 1798 edition; five of them were omitted from the 1825 edition and never restored; others were drastically reduced in 1825. These notes, reflecting Moratin's rational approach to the play and his wish to apply logical thought to the plot, indicate his conformity to the neoclassical canon and point out Shakespeare's departures from them. Some are notes expressing Moratin's opinion of the play, Shakespeare, or the theatre in general. Other notes explain Shakespeare's assumed intentions and

<sup>22</sup> "[L]os afectos terribles que deben animarla, las grandes ideas de que ha de estar llena, la noble y robusta expresion que corresponde a tales pasiones, la unidad de interes que nunca debe debilitarse..." (II-2).

the possible consequences of the action at various stages (I-20, 33; II-4, 11, 18, 22; III-2, 8, 11; IV-16; V-11, 12). There are notes remarking on literary allusions (II-12, 15) or the historical background of the tragedy (I-1, 5), with comments on customs and superstitions (I-30, 32; II-13, 17; III-15; IV-7, 13; V-4), problems of translation (I-9; IV-11), and other (French) translations (I-11, 18, 31; II-21; III-26).

The most frequent type is that censuring the shortcomings Moratín found in the play and expressing his disapproval of:

- the introduction of useless episodes, lack of unity of action and of dramatic verisimilitude (I-8, 14, 21; II-1, 14; III-4, 13);
- the introduction of ridiculous, useless, or inappropriate characters (I-22; II-2; III-21, 23; IV-4; V-1);
- the mixing of tragic and comic elements (II-3, 8);
- the exuberance, obscurity, or inappropriateness of Shakespeare's style (I-11, 12, 17, 22, 23; II-19, 20; III-12, 22; IV-1, 3, 14, 18);
- Shakespeare's puns (I-32; III-6; V-2, 5);
- the appearance of supernatural elements (I-7), and
- Shakespeare's concessions to people's bad taste, which go against the didactic purpose of the theatre (V-I).

Moratín also provides reasons for such shortcomings in the plays of a genius. In the case of a "ridiculous" image, he remarks that Shakespeare "could not cross out" (*"no sabía borrar,"* I-12). And when Moratín remarks that "the author did not bother to study the plan of his tragedy," he adds that "at that time all dramatic poets did the same" (*"porque el autor se cansó poco en estudiar el plan de su tragedia, pero en aquel tiempo [...] todos los poetas dramáticos hacían lo mismo,"* IV-9). However, Moratín was a fair judge. He did not only comment on what he disliked, but also, though far less frequently, expressed his satisfaction and approval of some aspects of the play, which made up for the shortcomings that he found in it. At the end of Act 3, for example, Moratín comments:

In this scene the defects of plan and style are compensated by the great interest of the situation, the quick and lively dialogue, the liveliness of the portrait.

En esta escena se compensan los defectos de plan y estilo, con el grande interés de la situación, lo animado y rápido del diálogo, la viveza de las pinturas.

(III-20)

Moratin also expresses his satisfaction about the moral lesson which he sometimes finds in the play and in the simplicity of style that he acknowledges and praises. On one occasion, he notes that "these reflections are just, adequate to the situation, and expressed with appropriate concision" ("*estas reflexiones son justas, propias de la situación, y dichas con la brevedad conveniente,*" III-24). On another occasion he remarks on the appropriateness of style as follows: "Horatio's style is appropriate to a tragedy" ("*Horacio usa aquí un estilo digno de la tragedia,*" I-6).

To illustrate the deft combination of Moratin's translation and notes, it is worth taking a closer look at Act 2, scene 2, a scene that critics from Samuel Johnson to Frank Kermode have praised for its changing tone from comic to tragic, and for its rich variety of styles in prose and blank verse.<sup>23</sup> Moratin censures this variety, which he considers a form of irregularity.

a) *Introduction of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (Moratin, scene 3). Moratin indicates that these are new characters who have not been introduced at the beginning ("*de quienes no se tenia noticia,*" II-6).<sup>24</sup> The parallelism that is found in the thanks given to them: "Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern" (Claudius at 2.2.33), and "Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz" (Gertrude at 2.2.34) is lost in Moratin's translation:

<sup>23</sup> Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 96-97.

<sup>24</sup> Moratin explains what will happen to the characters, and provides the original English names Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, here called Guillermo and Ricardo.

CLAUDIO Muchas gracias, cortés Guillermo. Gracias, Ricardo.  
 GERTRUDIS Os quedo muy agradecida señores.

(279)

However, as Moratín usually keeps the doublets of the play, Guildenstern's reply "Heavens make our presence and our practices / Pleasant and helpful to him" (2.2.38-39) is rendered as "*Haga el cielo que nuestra compañía y nuestros conatos puedan serle agradables y útiles*" (280).

b) *The return of Cornelius and Voltemand from Norway* (Moratín, scenes 4 and 5). Moratín's note comments on their constant travelling and its speed: "nobody will say that they have been much delayed" ("*nadie dirá que se han detenido mucho*," II-7), he comments ironically. Again, the doublets are kept: "Most fair return of greetings and desires" (2.2.60) becomes "*Corresponde con la más sincera amistad a vuestras atenciones y á vuestro ruego*" (282). The conciseness of Shakespeare's original, however, has been lost.

c) *Polonius believes that Hamlet is mad because he is in love with Ophelia* (Moratín, scene 6). Moratín renders Polonius's rhetorical doublets, noting the contradiction in his words (II-9), and informs the reader that the aim of this passage is "to incite the audience's laughter" ("*va dirigido á excitar la risa del público*"). He censures the mixing of tragic and comic elements in a tragedy as inappropriate (II-8). In this same passage, he criticizes the mixing of verse and prose, aware that this has also been praised by "panegyrists" of Shakespeare ("*en lo que también han querido hallar un primor sus panegiristas*," II-10).

d) *Hamlet teases Polonius* (Moratín, scene 7). Moratín's didactic aim again leads him to clarify Shakespeare's intention. He explains that Hamlet's words in 2.2.183-84 are nonsense because he "pretends to be mad" ("*hace el papel de loco*," II-11).

e) *The first dialogue between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (Moratín, scene 8). With reference to the bawdy language here, Moratín warns the reader that part of it tends to be omitted on stage. Nevertheless, he admits that Shakespeare was one of the most decent

playwrights of his time (II-13).<sup>25</sup> At the players' arrival, Moratín says that in this passage Shakespeare "is in a deep sleep." Moreover, he would seem to agree with Le Tourneur who commented that "Shakespeare wanders off his subject. Indeed, he does" (II-15 in the 1825 edition. "Shakespeare *se aparta un poco de sus asunto*. En efecto, se aparta un poco," II-14).

f) *Hamlet teases Polonius* (Moratín, scene 9). To Polonius's catalogue of dramatic types, Moratín, the critic, adds a note (II-15) enlarging on genres, styles, and their names. The following note (II-16)<sup>26</sup> discusses and rejects the possibility of plays with unity of place in Shakespeare's time.

g) *Hamlet's welcome to the players, the verses on Pyrrhus, and setting the Mousetrap* (Moratín, scene 10). In this passage Moratín preserves Hamlet's colloquial prose, contrasting it with the bombastic verses that follow, and renders "there was no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury" (2.2.444-45), as "*no había en los versos toda la sal necesaria para sazonar el asunto*" (307). Moratín comments on the scholars' different reaction to these verses, and he states his opinion that they truly correspond to Shakespeare's style. He finds in them "robust fantasy, daring images, gigantic expression, pompous style, a lot of description, inappropriate adornments" ("*fantasía robusta, imágenes atrevidas, expresión gigantesca, pompa de estilo, mucha descripción, adornos inoportunos, viciosa abundancia*"). These, Moratín believes, are characteristic of Shakespeare.

h) *Hamlet's soliloquy* (Moratín, scene 11). Moratín adds three notes to this passage: always with his didactic purpose in mind, Moratín summarizes Hamlet's reflection, which he finds "just and appropriate," but adds: "the ridiculous images which amplify and adorn it, spoil everything" ("*esta reflexion de Hamlet es justa y oportuna; pero las imágenes ridículas con que la amplifica y adorna, lo echan todo á perder*," II-20).<sup>27</sup> In II-21

<sup>25</sup> This note appears as an unnumbered Academia footnote in the 1830 edition.

<sup>26</sup> II-17 in the 1825 edition.

<sup>27</sup> II-21 in the 1825 edition.

he notes that Le Tourneur omitted the passage about “plucking off the beard and blowing it in the face [...] even when he solemnly promised that his translation was *exact and faithful*” (“*Letourneur omitió en la versión de este monólogo lo de arrancar las barbas y soplarlas [...] no obstante haber prometido solemnemente en el prólogo que su traducción será exacta y fiel*”).<sup>28</sup> Finally, in II-22 Moratín reflects on Hamlet’s purpose and its possible consequences, and he concludes: “Hamlet who has pretended to be mad until now, seems to be truly so, since he does not know that he can be a victim of his own artifice” (“*Hamlet que ha fingido hasta ahora estar loco, ya parece que lo es de veras, pues no conoce que puede ser víctima de su propio artificio*”).<sup>29</sup>

Moratín borrowed notes from English editions of *Hamlet* that were circulating in London at the time of his stay there, which may provide a clue as to which edition he used as the source for his translation. In his notes he mentions three editors of Shakespeare’s works – Hanmer, Warburton and Johnson – but there is no conclusive evidence to prove which edition he used. Although he mentions Hanmer more often than the other editors – six out of twelve references, but sometimes incorrectly<sup>30</sup> – he does not completely follow any of them, so none can have been his only textual source. He may have used several.

Moratín also borrowed from French translators, especially Le Tourneur. Although in the prologue and in some of his notes he criticized French versions, Moratín may have borrowed from Le Tourneur’s “Vie de Shakespeare,” as well as several notes, which he does not always acknowledge.<sup>31</sup> Moratín was also influenced by Voltaire. In his prologue to the translation, Moratín qualifies *Hamlet* as an “extraordinary and monstrous whole” (“*un todo extraordinario y monstruoso*”), which recalls Voltaire’s words in his *Lettres philosophiques* “*il y a de si belles scènes, des morceaux si grands et si terribles répandus dans ses farces monstrueuses qu’on appelle Tra-*

<sup>28</sup> II-22 in the 1825 edition.

<sup>29</sup> II-23 in the 1825 edition.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolph Morgan, “Moratín’s *Hamlet*,” Unpublished PhD Dissertation (Stanford University, 1965), 117 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, “Moratín’s *Hamlet*,” 136 ff.

*gédies*.”<sup>32</sup> Again, in note (I-2) Moratín complains about the lack of “tragic sublimity” of Francisco’s expression: “Not a mouse stirring” (1.1.8), although he admits that it is appropriate for a soldier. This is very similar to Voltaire’s sentence in his *Lettre à l’Académie française*: “*Oui monsieur, un soldat peut répondre ainsi dans un corps de garde; mais non pas sur le théâtre.*”<sup>33</sup>

In spite of Moratín’s critical judgement of *Hamlet*, his translation was very honest, since he did not alter Shakespeare’s departures from the neoclassical canon. Moratín’s fidelity to the source text, even when he did not agree with it, explains the success and permanence of his translation. In the early twentieth century Juliá Martínez wrote that Moratín was the writer who most influenced Spanish translators of Shakespeare, that the importance given to this translation was “universal,” and that it was still reproduced and preferred to later ones.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Moratín’s *Hamlet* has gone through many editions not only in the nineteenth but also in the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

Moratín’s translation and comments form a paradoxical yet complementary whole which reflects his inner conflict between his rational self – tending to neoclassicism – and his “affections” and spontaneity which were greatly attracted by Shakespeare’s genius. In his attraction to and criticism of Shakespeare, we can see the persistence of neoclassicism as well as the beginning of a new literary movement, Romanticism.

<sup>32</sup> Voltaire, “Dix-huitième lettre. Sur la tragédie,” in Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques ou Lettres anglaises*, edited by Raymond Naves (Paris: Garnier, 1964), 105.

<sup>33</sup> Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1879), XXX, 363.

<sup>34</sup> See Eduardo Juliá Martínez, *Shakespeare en España* (Madrid: Tip. de la Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1918), 120-25.

<sup>35</sup> Ángeles Serrano, *Bibliografía Shakespeariana en España: Crítica y Traducción* (Alicante: Publicaciones del Instituto de Estudios Alicantinos, 1983).



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# From Printed Text to Performance Text

## Brazilian Translations of Shakespearean Drama

José Roberto O'Shea

A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say.  
I say it just  
Begins to live  
That day.

Emily Dickinson<sup>1</sup>

Translating and staging translations of dramatic literature is an activity akin to writing and staging original drama, and the genre specificity of drama bears equally upon play translating and play writing, be such specificity related to the printed text or the performance text. Drawing on working definitions of drama, theatre, translation, and theatre translation, as well as a typological model by Patrice Pavis, I shall in this article reflect on dramatic translation, and present examples from my own annotated verse translations of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline, King of Britain* into Brazilian Portuguese.

Bypassing the debate on the status of the dramatic text, meaning, in Pavis's words, "the question of whether a play can exist inde-

<sup>1</sup> Poem no. 1212, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (New York: Little, Brown and Co. [1955] 1961), 534-35.

pendently as a text or whether it can only exist in performance," I first want to stress that a play text exists in two basic dimensions – written and oral – and to foreground the corresponding general distinction between drama and theatre.<sup>2</sup> As is known, drama is most often understood as dramatic literature, written language, "the verbal script which is read or heard in performance."<sup>3</sup> Being relatively fixed and certainly recordable, being read and perceived in similar ways as fiction, poetry, or any other written form, drama enjoys *ars longa*, bearing such an affinity with literature that literary theory and literary studies have a tendency to think of – and reduce – theatrical activity to drama. No wonder, actualised by means of written language, drama is, for one thing, dominated by a linguistic model, enjoying and depending on the hegemony of the written text over signification, for another, the element of theatre most accessible to examination and appraisal.<sup>4</sup> However, as has often been pointed out, a major hindrance in the development of theatre studies seems to be precisely this continuing emphasis on the written text, to the detriment of other sign systems that partake in theatre.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike drama, theatre is not just written text on a page. Having *vita brevis*, theatre is not fixed, hardly recordable, unrepeatable, and difficult to measure.<sup>6</sup> Theatre is performance, even if the performance of a drama text; it is "all that is visible or audible on stage."<sup>7</sup> Theatre is spoken language signifying side by side visual, aural, and sensorial language, by means of actors, space, movement, props,

<sup>2</sup> Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (1992), translated by Loren Kruger (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Fortier, *Theatre/Theory: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 4 and 13.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways through the Labyrinth: Strategies and Methods for Translating Theatre Texts," in *The Manipulation of Literature*, edited by Theo Hermans (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Fortier, *Theatre/Theory*, 91; and Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-20.

<sup>7</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 25.

light, music, and the complex interrelations among these, all coming to fruition in reception.<sup>8</sup> Again unlike drama, in theatre written and spoken language have no hegemony over signification.

However simplistic, the common distinction between drama and theatre is useful because the dramatic text and the performance have each their own semiology – the one predominantly verbal and symbolic, the other non-verbal and iconic – and placing them in the same theoretical space will be to the detriment of either. For Susan Bassnett, “the written text is *one* code, *one* system in a complex set of codes that interact together in performance” (italics added).<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it is the given *mise en scène* which modulates between page and stage, by putting the play text under dramatic and stage tension, by testing the play text against its own enunciation.<sup>10</sup>

It has been argued that the debates on the nature of the relationship between the written and the performance texts, between dramatic literature and theatre, seem to have ignored the problem of interlingual translation.<sup>11</sup> Yet, all I have observed about drama and theatre so far equally applies to original and to translated texts. I am defining translation, in general, as a creative hermeneutic *process*: an interpretative intellectual activity characterised by reading, rereading, researching, testing, adapting, writing, and rewriting.

Definitions can facilitate understanding, but strict rules cannot always be drawn from them. In the introduction to his collection of essays entitled *Stages of Translation* (1996), David Johnston states that the representative group of twenty-six contributors share one conviction, as they reflect upon theatre translation: there can be no hard and fast rules for the craft, “there can no more be a prescriptive theory for translation than there can be for the writing of a play or a

<sup>8</sup> Fortier, *Theatre/Theory*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 94.

<sup>10</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 2 and 25-30.

<sup>11</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 89; and Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 136.

poem.”<sup>12</sup> There is no prescription, no formula, but there is an axiom. Since in drama many translators work *primarily* on a written level, whenever turning drama into theatre, given the important non-verbal dimension of theatre, we face a unique problem: the translator has to grapple with a multiplicity of factors other than linguistic.<sup>13</sup> No doubt, whether or not *gestus* and performance are latent in the written text, the theatre translator “carries the responsibility of transferring not only the linguistic but a series of other codes as well.”<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, Patrice Pavis's scheme for specifying theatre translation has been useful for my understanding of my own work as a theatre translator, and has also helped me speculate on the strong relation between play writing and play translating. I am referring to Pavis's “series of concretisations,” in the sense that he has given the term following Roman Ingarden. I am in no position here to assay a comprehensive analysis of phenomenological aesthetics and reception theory. However, it may suffice to recall that, for Ingarden, the literary work is “concretised” by being read, listened to, or seen.<sup>15</sup> Such “concretisation,” we recall, is distinguished from the work itself; it is the complex process through which a literary work is raised to the level of “imaginational experience,” in the case of reading, or “perceptual experience,” in the case of a stage play.<sup>16</sup> The work of art exists in its own right but it can only be apprehended in one of its “concretisations,” depending upon the constitutive acts of a reader or a playgoer.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in Ingarden, reading – and I would argue, translating – is a creative process, one in which the reader/translator

<sup>12</sup> *Stages of Translation: Essays and Interviews on Translating for the Stage*, edited by David Johnston (Bath: Absolute Press, 1996), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 87.

<sup>14</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 89.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (London and New York: Edward Arnold, 1992), 22-23.

<sup>16</sup> Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature* (1931) translated and introduced by George Grabawicz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 336.

<sup>17</sup> Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, 332-55.

at once “concretises” that which in some sense he constructs and modifies what the author has provided. When I think of my experience as a drama/theatre translator, I find that Pavis’s typology aptly describes the transformations of a dramatic text, from original (T<sub>0</sub>), to literary translation (T<sub>1</sub>), to dramaturgy (T<sub>2</sub>), to performance text (T<sub>3</sub>), and finally to reception (T<sub>4</sub>).

Simply put, T<sub>0</sub> – the original text – is the result of the author’s creative choices and formulations, and understandable in relation to its surrounding culture and linguistic environment; moreover, it is readable in the context of its own “situation of enunciation.”<sup>18</sup> Obviously, T<sub>0</sub> is the textual point of departure for the translation process; in original play writing, it would correspond to one of various texts that might serve as a play’s sources.

Pavis’s T<sub>1</sub> – “textual concretisation” – is the written text of the translation. It is the initial transformation, the translator working as reader and already as dramatist. At this stage, however, the “situation of enunciation” is virtual, not actual, pretty much in the head, eyes, and ears of the translator. Here, the translator knows that the translation, on the one hand, cannot preserve the original situation of enunciation and, on the other, is intended for a future situation of enunciation with which the translator, at this stage, is barely, if at all, familiar. I would argue that, for every practical purpose, the published translation that has not been staged is akin to the published original play text that is used as the basis for a given production of the given play text in the original language.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the written nature of this initial textualisation does not entail the neglect of non-verbal elements in drama. In fact, even at this initial “concretisation,” just as

<sup>18</sup> For Pavis, this is the moment when a play text is presented by an actor in a specific time and space, to an audience that receive at once text and *mise en scène* (Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 136).

<sup>19</sup> In the case of Shakespeare, the text as published in whatever edition the playgoer may have read, or the production team may have elected to adopt. See Jay Halio, *Understanding Shakespeare’s Plays in Performance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 4.

is the case with play writing, in play translating, textual choices can already take into account dramaturgical implications, as I hope some of my examples below will illustrate. Already at this initial stage, original and translation are contemplated beyond a merely linguistic level; they are approached as dramaturgy.<sup>20</sup>

Pavis identifies as T2 the text's actual "dramaturgical concretisation."<sup>21</sup> If the translator has so far worked in relative isolation, at this stage, collaboration with director and actors who are to play the translated text proves indispensable, as dramaturgical choices become systematised and the "situation of enunciation" becomes actual rather than virtual, surely a parallel to the way original play staging involves testing and collaboration. To my mind, what Pavis calls "textual concretisation," corresponds to what Delabastita and D'hulst call "stage version,"<sup>22</sup> and to what Bassnett calls the basic "*scenario*" that is worked on by a company.<sup>23</sup> At this point, the concern with the playable and the speakable becomes paramount, effected by means of trials and the incorporation of spatiotemporal indications drawn from the text. At this point, it is the extralinguistic testing of stage directions that counts. Theatre practice shows that often enough it takes work on the rehearsal floor to realise and construct what is going on in a given scene, and what often appears abstruse on the page can be gleaned once actualised through spatial relationships and character interaction.<sup>24</sup> We are now fast approaching the script which will yield the performance text, one which "involves a range of sign systems that harmonise with the written, extending that written text into

<sup>20</sup> Lest, one might, as Prosper Mérimée reportedly said, "translate the language well enough, without translating the play" (quoted in Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 140).

<sup>21</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 141.

<sup>22</sup> *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, edited by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D'hulst (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 1993), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways through the Labyrinth," 91.

<sup>24</sup> Steeve Gooch, "Fatal Attraction," in *Stages of Translation*, 18.

space.”<sup>25</sup> The translator who is allowed in at this phase becomes involved simultaneously in the written and oral versions of the text, and just as actors test their performances through the audience, so translators depend on the feedback of the actor to test whether their “linguistic instinct” makes sense to anyone else.<sup>26</sup> And surely, the translated “dramaturgical concretisation” – with cuts, changes, adjustments, blocking, and the like – corresponds to an original play’s prompt book, which will include and accommodate the dramaturgical impact of a given production onto the printed, received text.

Necessarily an adaptation of and a commentary on T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>1</sub>, and T<sub>0</sub>, T<sub>3</sub> is the actual “stage concretisation,”<sup>27</sup> the on-stage, in-front-of-a-live-audience testing of T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>. This is the performance text, stage language taking over from more traditional linguistics. Now, given theatre’s intersemioticity, the “situation of enunciation” is repeatedly realised, night after night, *vis-à-vis* the various and dynamic relationships between textual and theatrical signs. Often, both in the case of originals and translations, a fair amount of textual trimming goes on in the stage concretisation, as the dramatic text can relieve itself of language that may become all too evident in the context of enunciation, like unnecessary personal and interrogative pronouns, or stage directions enacted into action. At this point, for instance, both in an original and in a translation, instead of writing “I want you to put the hat on that table,” one may well opt for “put it there,” counting on a corresponding look or gesture by the speaker.<sup>28</sup>

Pavis classifies T<sub>4</sub> as the text’s “receptive” or “recipient concretisation.”<sup>29</sup> This is the source play text, now translated, arriving at its end point, at the spectator, who thus receives the text after various

<sup>25</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 94.

<sup>26</sup> Gooch, “Fatal Attraction,” 20.

<sup>27</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 141–42.

<sup>28</sup> However interesting, the controversy around the notion of the underlying gesture in drama lies beyond my scope here. As to theatre’s situation of enunciation, no doubt, once again, it pertains equally to original and translation, as, in either case, an actor can at times salvage a poor textual passage or ruin a good one.

<sup>29</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 139 and 142.



concretisations or, as it were, intermediate translations. Any brief attempt to address theatre reception runs the risk of reducing the phenomenon's complex anthropological and cultural implications. For my purpose here, it will suffice to stress that, as response theory applied to theatre has shown, the audience, in the final analysis, establishes the use and meaning of  $T_0$ .<sup>30</sup>

But how do such concerns apply to Shakespeare's drama in translation? In the entry on "Shakespeare Translation," in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Dirk Delabastita lists a range of formidable technical problems which the translator of Shakespeare is faced with. It includes textual cruces, obscure cultural allusions, archaisms and neologisms, the contrast of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate diction, imagery, mixed metaphors, deliberate repetition, personification, puns, ambiguities and malapropism, elliptical grammar, compactness of expression, as well as the *bête noire*: the prosody.<sup>31</sup> Yet, real as these technical problems are, the translator is better served by becoming aware of them than mystified by them. For one thing, such problems do not apply solely to Shakespeare. For another, as Delabastita rightly argues, technical problems "are not the be-all and end-all of the question of translating Shakespeare" (223). In fact,

the understanding and evaluation of Shakespeare rests on textual, cultural, and ideological codes which are quite independent from the linguistic barrier and therefore tend to confront editors, critics, directors, adapters, and other English-speaking rewriters of Shakespeare with much the same dilemmas as the translators.<sup>32</sup>

Now, the history of the translation of Shakespeare's dramaturgy discloses that many translators have been mainly concerned with the lin-

<sup>30</sup> For an in-depth study of theatre reception, see Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Dirk Delabastita, "Shakespeare Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 223.

<sup>32</sup> Delabastita, "Shakespeare Translation," 223.

guistic problems of the written text and with the power of the verse; translating Shakespeare's plays has been an activity that "lies within the history of verse translation, not theatre translation."<sup>33</sup> Put differently, the dramaturgy has been approached more as dramatic poetry than as poetic drama. As it seems, in Shakespeare translation, especially in what Pavis would call T1, the linguistic aspect has remained virtually the sole focus, and the complex question of performability has simply been absent. And the textual myth is as strong as it is understandable. As is known, too often the texts of Shakespeare's plays are perceived as absolutes, and performance is expected to adhere to notions of "fidelity" that seem to function in spite of interpretation, culture, history, and geography. There is a strong tendency to overlook the possibilities that the received written text was set down following performance or memory, and that the original written text may have served as a "blueprint on which performers could build from their own experience."<sup>34</sup>

However, for many theatre professionals the "sacrosanct text" is a fantasy. Laurence Boswell, for example, argues that individuals who put on a play strive to make the story work, and to achieve that "the text will be beaten and twisted and turned to make whatever it is that group of people want to articulate."<sup>35</sup> In practice, how could it be otherwise? No doubt, theatre is culturally marked, as any theatre person can attest who has worked in more than one country and has become aware of the differences in rehearsal and performance

<sup>33</sup> Bassnett, "Translating for the Theatre: The Case against Performability," in *Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction* (Montreal: Concordia University) 4:1 (1991), 106.

<sup>34</sup> Bassnett, "Translating for the Theatre," 103. Remarking that it has become almost impossible for an English-language director to be freed from what she calls "the tyranny of the written Shakespearean text," Bassnett retells the apocryphal tale of the East European director who, on leaving a British production of a Shakespeare play, said: "that's wonderful. Everything remains to be done. All they played was the text" ("Ways through the Labyrinth," 88).

<sup>35</sup> Laurence Boswell, "The Director as Translator," in *Stages of Translation*, 149.

conventions, as well as audience expectation.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, based on the translator's personal interpretation, retextualised into a different language, to be received by a different culture, a translation of a Shakespeare play materially destabilises the original written text, yielding its appropriation and renewed cultural inscription (not to mention its circulation and dissemination), and, possibly, contributing to the theatrical complexity of the given text's performance. Dennis Kennedy has demonstrated that the endpoint of undermining belief in an "authorised" representational mode of performing or speaking Shakespeare would be to liberate performance from the text. Again, the very act of translation, Kennedy argues, subverts the authority of Shakespeare's text, rendering it afresh, revitalised for each new production, allowing for imaginative focus on physical over verbal expression.<sup>37</sup>

In my annotated, Brazilian-Portuguese verse translations of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline, King of Britain*, the commission is for publication rather than for a given stage production, and to some extent I do treat the text as a work that is going to be read – as well as heard and seen. Therefore, at first, I attempt to focus on the linguistic structures, rather than on an abstract, hypothetical performance.<sup>38</sup> However, even though working at Pavis's T1 level, which is to say, crafting a translation text in its most "literary" form, I am already concerned with dramaturgical issues and the situation of enunciation,

<sup>36</sup> Bassnett, "Translating for the Theatre," 107. David Johnston recalls his positive response to Peter Brook's *La Tempête*, in which the fact of the translation became woven into the director's re-constitution of *The Tempest*. By using a multi-cultural cast to speak Jean-Claude Carrière's lines, Brook voiced the sort of accents Parisians would normally associate with the dispossessed, extending into the present moment the range of Shakespeare's reflection on the use and abuse of power. See David Johnston, "Theatre Pragmatics," in *Stages of Translation*, 60.

<sup>37</sup> Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare without His Language," in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, edited by James C. Bulman (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 133-46.

<sup>38</sup> Bassnett, "Translating for the Theatre," 102.

especially as these relate directly to textual matters like lexical updating and speakability.

Rewriting Shakespeare for an audience across time, language, culture, and miles, I have opted for a lexis and for patterns of speech that belong to a particular place and time: Brazil in the second half of the twentieth century. And since lexis and speech patterns are in a continuous process of change, there seems to be a “special need for the continued retranslation and updating of theatre texts.”<sup>39</sup> It has in fact been argued that Shakespeare is made more accessible in translation precisely because the work of updating the text to the new situation of enunciation is by definition part of the translation process.<sup>40</sup>

Actors cannot really play what they cannot perceive or speak, and a fundamental issue, speakability, equally applies, once again, to play writing and play translating. As I translate, I ask myself: how do the words sound to a Brazilian audience, both in isolation and together? A few examples should suffice. At the arrival of a messenger from Egypt in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Lepidus says:

Here's more news.<sup>41</sup>

The literal translation – *Eis aqui mais notícias* – is problematic in Brazilian Portuguese because, in enunciation, *mais* (meaning “more”) and *más* (meaning “bad”) sound very much alike; many members of the Brazilian audience would in fact hear: “Here’s bad news.”

<sup>39</sup> Bassnett, “Ways through the Labyrinth,” 89. In a later article (1991), Bassnett submits that the average life span of a translated theatre text is 25 years. See “Translating for the Theatre,” 111.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Michel Déprats draws on Goethe’s notions of *Verjüngung* (rejuvenation) and *Auffrischung* (regeneration) to argue against archaism in Shakespeare translation. See Déprats, “The ‘Shakespearean Gap’ in French,” in *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997), 125–33. I have addressed the question of lexical updating elsewhere (“*Antony and Cleopatra* in Brazilian Portuguese: Purposes and Procedures,” in *Shakespeare Worldwide: Translation and Adaptation* [forthcoming]). For this reason, I shall limit myself here to examples that pertain to speakability.

<sup>41</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by David Bevington, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.4.33.

Though totally in keeping with the content of the news, it is not what Shakespeare wrote. An acceptable alternative, therefore, would be:

*Eis aqui outras novas.* [Here is further news.]

In the following scene, Cleopatra wants to send yet more messages to Antony. She tells Charmian,

... come, away,  
Get me ink and paper.

(1.5.78-79)

The translation – *Traz-me já papel e tinta* – is unspeakable in Portuguese because the elision “*mi já*” encapsulates the sound of the verb “to urinate.” Again, “*Traz-me papel e tinta*” sounds possible. For similar reasons, Enobarbus’ “The barge she sat in” (2.2.201) cannot be translated as “*o barco dela*,” much less, “*a barca dela*.”

Another example from *Antony and Cleopatra*: addressing Eros, Antony claims:

Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,  
And all the haunt be ours.

(4.14.53-54)

To translate – *Dido e seu Enéas, sem cortejo* – is to render the line laughable on the Brazilian stage, since, in speech, *seu*, placed before a proper name is not a possessive pronoun (her) but a demotic form of address, “Mr.” Placing the possessive elsewhere in the line seems to solve the problem: “*Dido e Enéas ficarão sem seu cortejo*.”

Referring to Jupiter’s eagle, Sicilius in *Cymbeline* says:

His royal bird  
Preens the immortal wing.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Cymbeline* in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.5.211-12.

“*Sua ave real*,” if not entirely unspeakable, is at least awkward, creating the elision “*suave*,” which means “soft.” Here, as the situation of enunciation clarifies the referent, there is no need to state the possessive pronoun at all: “*A ave nobre penteia a asa imortal*.”

It is also important to realise that lexical accessibility does not imply domestication.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the translator must strive to ensure that there is no undue simplification of diction by turning coherent language that in Shakespeare is coherently incoherent.<sup>44</sup> In great excitement after reading Posthumus’ summons to Milford Haven, for example, Innogen cries out: “O for a horse with wings!” (3.2.47-68), and proceeds to overwhelm Pisanio with a purple torrent of remarks, many of which are uttered in fragments, intermingled with questions, some of which she herself answers. Typically, the incoherence of Innogen’s words eloquently expresses her exhilaration at the prospect of “flying” to Milford Haven to encounter her exiled husband.<sup>45</sup> If this passage were to be domesticated in translation, and the syntax tidied up to facilitate comprehension the rhetorical impact of the lines would be sadly buffered, thus jeopardising the effect of this important theatrical moment.

Besides the concern with sound and rhetoric, the theatre translator who is aware of delivery and reception will watch out for off-putting referents in the target culture. Addressing the gods, Posthumus begs for remorse to free himself of his guilt:

<sup>43</sup> A term used by Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator’s Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) to describe and then criticise the translation strategy in which a see-through, fluent style is adopted to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text for the target language audience (Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie, *Dictionary of Translation Studies* [Manchester: St Jerome, 1997], 43-44).

<sup>44</sup> The phrase was used by Graham Bradshaw in the context of Shakespeare translation in a lecture entitled “Shakespeare’s Peculiarity,” delivered at The Shakespeare Institute, in Stratford-upon-Avon, on 24 April 1997.

<sup>45</sup> I am reminded of Joanne Pearce’s operatic delivery of the lines in the 1997 RSC production of the play, directed by Adrian Noble.

give me  
The penitent instrument to pick that bolt,  
Then free for ever.

(*Cymbeline*, 5.5.104-05)

Naively to translate “free for ever” as “*sempre livre*” is to ignore a powerful cultural referent in the line’s reception, and will probably provoke unintentional laughter in many of the Brazilian audience for whom *Sempre Livre* is shown nightly on TV as one of the country’s leading brands of feminine napkins.

As these sparse examples may indicate, already at the first level of retextualisation (T1), theatre translation can be concerned with dramaturgy, orality, and reception. In fact, it is precisely this oral, *performative* aspect that determines the specificity of theatre translation and makes it impossible for theatre texts to be treated in translation as texts written solely to be read. In theatre, be it in the original or in translation, paraphrasing the Emily Dickinson epigraph above, the word becomes alive when it is said. It cannot be denied that invariably the written original is the primary raw material, the starting point, and, therefore, especially at a translation’s early concretisation (T1), an abstract, hypothetical notion of performability is not to be placed before – only side by side with – textual considerations. Yet, that the linguistic text, however basic, is only one of the elements of performance is a well-known fact to theatre semioticians, and a fact which theatre translators can attest.<sup>46</sup>

At the risk of labouring the point, I reiterate: *mutatis mutandis*, what I have observed about translated plays also applies to original plays. Regarding two fundamental differences, translator Anthony Vivis sees one as a “freedom”: the fact that basic dramaturgical decisions

<sup>46</sup> W. B. Worthen, drawing on Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, has reminded us that dramatic performance cannot be reduced to the performance of language, as though dramatic performance were merely a mode of utterance, the production of speech acts. See W. B. Worthen, “Drama, Performativity, and Performance,” *PMLA* 113:5 (1998), 1097.

(structure, plot, character, momentum) have already been made by the original dramatist. The other he regards as a “responsibility”: the fact that theatre translators are limited to a mode of expression they can recreate at best, not originate.<sup>47</sup> For actor, playwright, and translator John Clifford, “the task of translating remains the basic creative task; to feel with the characters, become the characters. And listen to what they have to say.”<sup>48</sup> Now, the notion that *translating* for the theatre is akin to *writing* for the theatre is deceptively simple. Besides the practical consequences that such perception may bear regarding the professional routine and the anxiety of the stage translator, there is also an important, liberating, conceptual gain: the original Shakespeare play text need no longer be placed at a reverential hierarchical position, as a secular scripture; the successful translation displaces the original and is to be accepted for what it is: an original in its own right.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Vivis, “The Stages of a Translation,” in *Stages of Translation*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> John Clifford, “Translating the Spirit of the Play,” in *Stages of Translation*, 266.



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## **Part Two**

### **Portuguese Shakespeares: A Casebook**

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## From Words to Action

### Translating Shakespeare for the Portuguese Stage

Maria João da Rocha Afonso

“A playable translation is the product not of linguistic, but rather of a dramaturgical act.”<sup>1</sup> This statement by Georges Mounin sums up what I think the activity of the translator for the stage to be. I am aware of the various consequences of such a statement. Every act of translation implies an act of interpretation of the source text. However, while translating for the reader, the translator has few constraints to his work (apart from those he himself defines), the translator for the stage faces a complex range of external interactions. Between the text translated to be read and its reader there are no intermediaries; an intimate relationship is established between the two. The reader can stop, go back, reread the translation, and so on. Between the translated play and its audience, however, stand many people, including the director and the actors who will convey the text to that audience. And while translating, the translator has to take all these “voices” into account while translating. In addition, the translator has to think of the conditions under which the translated text will be presented: the audience will be sitting in a theatre and must be able to understand the text as it is being spoken. There is no way of either stopping the flow of language or of going back, as is possible

<sup>1</sup> Georges Mounin, *Problèmes théoriques de la traduction*, 1963, quoted in Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 140.

in reading. And it is in the public, theatrical space that the “dramaturgical act” takes place.

Ever since Giles Ménage (1613-92) classified Nicolas Perrot d’Ablancourt’s (1606-64) translations as “*belles infidèles*,” translators have been obsessed with the notion of the translation’s fidelity towards the source text (whatever “fidelity” may mean).<sup>2</sup> The discussion has been long, and has not proved very fruitful: what exactly does “fidelity” mean? Fidelity towards what? Meaning? Also, when you work with a pair of languages like English and Portuguese which have very different structures, what happens to form? Fidelity to form? And, if so, what happens to meaning when the translator is forced to rhyme, to translate wordplay, or idioms? I wonder how, for instance, a British translator would deal with some Portuguese baroque poetry if he were to be “faithful” to form. These are just tiny samples of the problems any translator has to deal with. But the translator’s problems do not end here. The translator for the stage also has to think of voices, movement, intonation, diction, as well as the immediacy and conditions of the reception of the text.

Without meaning to imply that translators for the stage are the “martyrs” of the world of translation, their task is particularly daunting, and quite often unacknowledged. It is true that, when the practical work of staging a play starts everybody, mainly the actors, has demands related to the text. They want words changed, sentences altered and so on. They implicitly recognize the importance of the text for their own work, but any explicit acknowledgement is rare. It does not cross anybody’s mind to change a text originally written in the language in which it will be performed, but when rehearsals of a translated play start – or in the case of the director, even before that – everybody has some alteration that they want to see made. And the translator, when given the chance of accompanying the transposition of his work to the stage, has to negotiate. I often feel that a trans-

<sup>2</sup> A. Hurtado Albir, *La Notion de fidélité en traduction*, Collection Traductologie, no. 5 (Paris: Didier Érudition, 1990), 14.

lation is a balance between profit and loss and that we, the translators, whatever the purpose of our translation, have to make the biggest profit we can.

Negotiation does not mean that we have to comply with everything that is suggested to us, but, quite often, the opinion of those working on the stage is precious. On the one hand, they know, due to their acting experience, what turns out well and what does not to make the text effective on stage. But, on the other hand, if we do not listen to or negotiate with the actors, we run the serious risk of them changing the text without our knowledge, thus destorying the homogeneity of the translated play. Michel Bataillon refers to this predicament in his "Texte et théâtralité":

Il y a une certaine impunité dans la traduction littéraire; ou tout au moins la sanction opère de façon décalée, parfois de longues années plus tard. En revanche, la traduction destinée au théâtre est prise en charge par un être vivant, qui va parfois se trouver là dans un cul-de-sac. Pourtant, s'il arrive que les impasses que connaissent les comédiens tiennent au traducteur, elles peuvent aussi tenir au poète.<sup>3</sup>

Of special interest is the passage where Michel Bataillon speaks of the responsibility of the translator and of the way in which he should be careful not to force the actor into any dead-end speeches. Hence, we need to listen to the actors and try to understand their reasons, to trust their experience, if need be.

We must not forget the specific characteristics of a dramatic text. As Anne Übersfeld puts it, a dramatic text "is a text full of holes," and it is the ideas of the director and the body of the actor that are going to fill those holes.<sup>4</sup> Or, as Patrice Pavis has it:

This economy of the dramatic text and *à fortiori* of its translation for the stage allows actors to supplement the texts with all sorts of aural,

<sup>3</sup> Michel Bataillon, "Texte et théâtralité," in *Traduire le théâtre* (Le Méjan, Arles: Actes Sud, 1990), 70.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Übersfeld, *Lire le théâtre* (Paris: Belin, 2000), 19.

gestural, mimic and postural means. Thus, at this point, actors' rhythmic invention comes into play; their intonation can say more than a long speech, their phrasing can shorten or lengthen tirades according to taste, structuring and deconstructing the text.<sup>5</sup>

Pavis is talking both of the translation of the dramatic text, from one language to another, and of the translation from words to action, from page to stage. Surely, this applies to any stage author, but the responsibility grows when dealing with a rich and complex set of play texts like Shakespeare's. A person sitting down in a theatre to see the performance of a Shakespeare play, is likely to have great expectations. After all the spectator is about to see a play by an author almost universally recognized as one of the greatest playwrights in the Western world. Shakespeare is certainly the most famous of them all. And somewhere between the original text and the performed version of it one stands the translator.

I cannot speak for other countries, but to translate Shakespeare for the Portuguese stage is somewhat of an adventure. Until quite recently, to most of our theatre audiences, Shakespeare was just a name: during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s we had almost no Shakespeare on stage. This state of affairs changed during the 90s. So when I first started to work for the theatre, I did not intend to translate his texts and was quite happy to work as a dramaturge or literary advisor on productions of *Hamlet* (1987) and *King Lear* (1990). But then I was asked to translate *Richard II* (1994) for the National Theatre. I must confess that my first reaction was one of fright and denial: Shakespeare and the National at the same time? But then I took up the challenge. In the rest of this paper, I will discuss some of my experiences, which will involve considerations about the characteristics of the Shakespearean texts that make them so difficult to translate into Portuguese, the difficulties I encountered while translating *Richard II*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996), and *Measure for Measure* (1997), while adapting an existing Portuguese translation of *King Lear*

<sup>5</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 144.

(1997), and translating as well as adapting *Love's Labour's Lost* (1998).

To translate is always to establish a relationship between two cultures and, quite often, between two different times in history. Now, Shakespeare belongs both to a culture and a time that are not very familiar to the Portuguese, if at all. Knowledge about Elizabethan culture is not widespread in our country, and the Bard's plays only make full sense when considered within the context of something like the sixteenth- or seventeenth-century "world picture," to use Tillyard's phrase, though with due caution. How can one understand Ophelia's madness, Iago's jealousy, or the end of *Measure for Measure*? In *Measure for Measure*, for example, Lucio refers to a game of "tick-tack," making it a bawdy synonym for sexual intercourse. Since backgammon, of which tick-tack is a variety, is not a popular game in Portugal, Lucio's reference would be totally unintelligible to a Portuguese audience if I did not help the translation along in some way. In other words, I had to find an expression that would suggest the meanings Shakespeare wanted and, at the same time, could be understood as a game. The solution was "vai e vem" which is a children's game, but which can also suggest the intended underlying sexual meaning.

Shakespearean language itself is different from the English of the twentieth century as is the use made of it in terms of phrasing, rhetorical images, and the like. Shakespeare's English is difficult for the British themselves, so it is easy to understand that it is even more difficult for the foreigner. The texts contain words that have gone out of usage and which make reference to ideas and images that have become strange to us. To understand them involves a certain amount of study and research. The meaning is not always clear and we have to make it clear for our audiences. All this has to be dealt with. But there are other than purely linguistic problems.

In general, Portuguese actors are not trained to speak texts of the Shakespearean kind: long texts, with alternating verse and prose, with long sentences, soliloquies, and monologues, and in a language which, in its formal aspects, is often far from the language of today.



The same applies to the audience: the plays usually take about three hours to perform and Portuguese audiences often are not used to this length and, so, get tired and bored. Therefore, we, translators, before the rest of the team gets to work, have to devise strategies both to accommodate the text to the actors, and be “audience friendly” without betraying Shakespeare.

Patrice Pavis, in *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* comments on this:

None the less, the criterion of the playable or speakable (text) is valid on the one hand as a means of measuring the way a particular text is received, but it becomes problematic once it degenerates into a norm of “playing well” or of verisimilitude.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of the translation is not to transform the original text into a Digest Shakespeare, or to make it “easy” – in a bad sense – for the actors: on the contrary, the idea is to give the audience as much of Shakespeare as we possibly can, while keeping their interest. The theatre audience must hear the text and intuit why the translator made the choices he did and not others. The task is difficult but challenging and fascinating.

As a translator, my first problem is rendering form: not being a poet, I do not translate verse into verse. Translating into prose, though, I still have to struggle to preserve somehow the flow of the language and the rhythm of the verse, blank verse or rhyming verse. I can do this by means of punctuation, word order, and by, literally, measuring the words – on average, Portuguese has longer words than English – and alternating short and long words. And this is one of the instances in which a dictionary of synonyms is helpful. In addition, I sometimes need to cut up long sentences into smaller ones, so the actors can “breathe” them and speak them audibly. *Richard II*, Act 3, scene 3, contains a speech for Richard with two sentences whose length would daunt any translator:

<sup>6</sup> Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 143.

KING RICHARD [To Northumberland]  
 We are amazed, and thus long have we stood  
 To watch the fearful bending of thy knee,  
 Because we thought ourself thy lawful king.  
 An if we be, how dare thy joints forget  
 To pay their awful duty to our presence?  
 If we be not, show us the hand of God  
 That hath dismissed us from our stewardship,  
 For well we know no hand of blood and bone  
 Can grip the sacred handle of our sceptre,  
 Unless he do profane, steal or usurp.  
*And though you think that all as you have done  
 Have torn their souls by turning them from us  
 And we are barren and bereft of friends  
 Yet know: my master, God omnipotent,  
 Is mustering in his clouds on our behalf  
 Armies of pestilence, and they shall strike  
 Your children yet unborn and unbegot  
 That lift your vassal hands against my head  
 And threat the glory of my precious crown.*  
 Tell Bullingbrook, for yon methinks he stands,  
 That every stride he makes upon my land  
 Is dangerous treason. *He is come to ope  
 The purple testament of bleeding war,  
 But ere the crown he looks for live in peace  
 Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers' sons  
 Shall ill become the flower of England's face,  
 Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace  
 To scarlet indignation and bedew  
 Her pastor's grass with faithful English blood.*<sup>7</sup>

I translated each sentence as a sentence, and immediately realized that, although the actor who was going to play the part was very good, he would be lost and breathless before the end of both sentences. And the audience with him. So, I 'phoned him and asked him to come to my house and work on those two specific sentences.

<sup>7</sup> *King Richard II*, edited by Andrew Gurr, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3.3.72-100.

He said them over and over again until we found a way of making at least two sentences out of each of the initial ones. But it took us a whole afternoon.

There were instances where I had no alternative but to translate into verse: in the Duke's speech at the end of Act 3 in *Measure for Measure*, and all the speeches by the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which almost became a nightmare experience. I will return to this below.

Another problem is the way in which we deal with forms of address: how to translate "you" and "thou." Even before sitting down at our desk, we, as translators, have to define the exact kind of relationships between the characters in order to be able to choose the way they address each other. This is true for any translation from English into Portuguese but, when I translate Shakespeare, although I want him to be easily understood, at the same time, I want to make it a little, let us say, odd. Unless asked otherwise by the director – which has happened – I want the audience to find him familiar, but, at the same time, a little distant. After all, we are talking of an author who lived and wrote some four hundred years ago. This is why I often use the form of deference "*vós*," which implies very difficult verbal forms. Together with the use of the future and the conditional – which in Portuguese are not very common in spoken language – and a careful choice of vocabulary, I manage to get that combined feeling of familiarity and quaintness without, I hope, "losing" the audience's interest. "*Le diable c'est l'ennui*," says Peter Brook quite rightly, and we cannot allow the audience to feel bored. All these strategies have to be very well thought of and experimented with the actors to verify their effectiveness.

The first play I translated was *Richard II*, and it was no unproblematic affair. In the case of *Richard II*, I had no indications whatsoever from the director, and I was allowed to follow my own ideas. The first problem was the strategy, discussed above, to translate into prose. As it happened, *Richard II* contains some of the most inventive and complex poetry Shakespeare ever wrote, and its monologues and

soliloquies display an enormous variety of metaphors, and the images are rich in reference. I tried to convey all that lyricism by a careful choice of words and phrasing, and strove to preserve the semantic fields of the rhetorical images: if Shakespeare had a metaphor related to music, I tried to find one related to music as well in Portuguese and I used this method throughout the play, without success. Two passages in *Richard II*, however, are particularly difficult for the translator. Both are speeches by John of Gaunt. The first occurs in Act 2, scene 1:

Methinks I am a prophet new-inspired,  
And thus, expiring, do foretell of him.  
His rash, fierce blaze of riot cannot last,  
For violent fires soon burn out themselves.  
Small showers last long, but sudden storms are short.  
He tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes.  
With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder.  
Light vanity, insatiate cormorant,  
Consuming means, soon preys upon itself.  
*This* royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
*This* earth of majesty, *this* seat of Mars,  
*This* other Eden, demi-paradise,  
*This* fortress built by nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
*This* happy breed of men, this little world,  
*This* precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house  
Against the envy of less happier lands;  
*This* blessed plot, *this* earth, *this* realm, *this* England,  
*This* nurse, *this* teeming womb of royal kings,  
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,  
Renowned for their deeds as far from home  
For Christian service and true chivalry  
As is the sepulchre, in stubborn Jewry,  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;  
*This* land of such dear souls, *this* dear dear land,  
Dear for her reputation through the world,

Is now leased out—I die pronouncing it—  
 Like to a tenement or pelting farm.  
 England, bound in with the triumphant sea,  
 Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege  
 Of wat'ry Neptune, is now bound in with shame,  
 With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.  
 That England that was wont to conquer others  
 Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.  
 Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life,  
 How happy then were my ensuing death!

(2.1.31-60. Italics added)

From line 40 onwards, we have a continuous use of the demonstrative pronoun “this,” which is extremely problematic for the Portuguese translator. It rhetorically sets a rhythm and its importance can therefore not be underestimated. Faced with the speech by Gaunt, I could not just cut some of them. The problem with the pronoun “this” is that in English it is a small a-tonic word. Its Portuguese equivalent, however, is tonic and, as a result, its repetition in a speech tends to become rather imposing. I had to play both with the masculine (a-tonic) and feminine (tonic) form of the pronoun, and with the sound of the words each instance referred to, so that the pronoun did not become too prominent.

The other problem was John of Gaunt’s dying speech:

O, how that name befits my composition!  
 Old *Gaunt* indeed, and *gaunt* in being old.  
 Within me grief hath kept a tedious fast,  
 And who abstains from meat that is not *gaunt*?  
 For sleeping England long time have I watched.  
 Watching breeds leanness, leanness is all *gaunt*.  
 The pleasure that some fathers feed upon  
 Is my strict fast: I mean my children’s looks.  
 And therein fasting, hast thou made me *gaunt*.  
*Gaunt* am I for the grave, *gaunt* as a grave,  
 Whose hollow womb inherits naught but bones.

(2.1.73-83. Italics added)

In this passage, Shakespeare prominently plays with a number of meanings of the word “gaunt.” Now, we all know that the various synonyms of a word are never the same in two different languages. There is no equivalent to “gaunt” in Portuguese with the same broad scope of meanings. I could not escape the first occurrence as it was the name of the character who spoke the lines; for the other six occurrences I had to use six different words. What I tried to do was to understand Shakespeare’s intentions in this passage and then to try to choose the words that would translate his idea to the prospective audience. Despite my attempt, mentioned above, ever to strike a fair balance between profit and loss, this was a case of loss. I could not possibly render in Portuguese Shakespeare’s word play on “gaunt.”

A very different task was the translation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Before I started the translation, the director told me: “I want to do a show for an urban audience, aged between 17 and 25. So, think of that while translating.” This request put me in mind of the controversy among translators and scholars about whether a translation for the stage should be inextricably linked to a *mise en scène* or not. It is my conviction that it does not have to be necessarily so, and I agree with Jean-Michel Déprats when he says:

The translation must remain open, allow for play, without dictating its terms; it must be animated by a specific rhythm without imposing it. Translating for the stage does not mean twisting the text to suit what one has to show, or how or who will perform. It does not mean jumping the gun, predicting or proposing a *mise en scène*: it means making it possible.<sup>8</sup>

Because of what the director had asked me to do, my work on the Portuguese translation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* should, perhaps, be considered an exception. After I had finished translating the play, the director and I went through the text together, and we changed a

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Michel Déprats, “Le verbe, instrument du jeu Shakespearean,” *Théâtre en Europe* 7 (1985), quoted in Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, 145.

lot. The idea was to make the Athenians speak like the audience he had in mind, to preserve the fairies' lyrical language, and to have the mechanicals speak like uneducated Portuguese people. As a consequence, I had to define three different language levels and work within them. Given the fact that the fairies' text was to be rhymed verse, the translation was far from an easy task. Also, the transformations we effected were so considerable that, at the time, I told the director that if ever anyone would think of publishing the Portuguese version of the playtext, I would have to write a long essay to explain our choices. If not, people might think I had been out of my mind while choosing the vocabulary.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents another feature that makes it so difficult to translate into any other language: the names of the fairies and, moreover, of the mechanicals represent a form of characterization in the sense that they define their professions, their personalities. The nightmare of finding names in Portuguese that related both to personalities and their professions returned when I sat down to translate *Measure for Measure*. Here, it is not so much the translation of names like Isabella, Angelo, Escalus, or Claudio; the group that presents the real problem is that of the commoners, and of the petty criminals referred to by Pompey:

First, here's young Master Rash; he's in for a commodity of brown paper and old ginger, nine score and seventeen pounds, of which he made five marks ready money. Marry, then ginger was not much in request, for the old women were all dead. Then is there here one Master Caper, at the suit of Master Threepile the mercer, for some four suits of peach-coloured satin, which now peaches him a beggar. Then have we here young Dizzy, and young Master Deepvow, and Master Copperspur and Master Starve-lackey the rapier and dagger man, and young Drop-hair that killed lusty Pudding, and Master Forthright the tilter, and brave Master Shoe-tie the great traveller, and

wild Half-can that stabbed Pots, and I think forty more, all great doers in our trade, and are now “for the Lord’s sake.”<sup>9</sup>

This catalogue of names unmistakably serves to characterize Pompey’s companions. But this does not exhaust the list. Also, Mistress Overdone, for example, refers to the girl with whom Lucio has slept, and whom he has left pregnant, as the prostitute Mistress Kate Keep-down. To translation of these names combining professions and personalities, I used various strategies. In some cases, I simply translated the English names into Portuguese. I also coined new words, or I looked for telling and funny names in telephone directory.

Mistress Overdone was a special case. We all have an emotional relationship with our language and the strength of each word is not the same to all native speakers. For me, Overdone is quite a strong word: I love cooking and one of the tragedies that can happen in the kitchen is that the food we are cooking becomes overdone. With that in mind, I used a Portuguese word associated with cooking – “*recozida*.” For me this word has both the sense of something being overcooked and, consequently, hard, unpleasant to eat, and untasty. At the same time, it gives me the idea of a woman who has lived through many relationships with lots of men, which, since she is the owner of a brothel, seems more than appropriate.

My experience with *King Lear* was a different one again. I could not start from scratch as if I were working on a new translation. We had to base ourselves on an existing one, and it was an academic one at that, hardly suitable for the stage. Remembering the trouble the actors had had working with the original, I fail to agree with Angel-Luis Pujante from the University of Murcia, currently the most popular Spanish translator of Shakespeare, who believes that an academic translation and a stage translation may be interchangeable. They are

<sup>9</sup> *Measure for Measure*, edited by J. W. Lever, in *The Arden Shakespeare. Complete Works*, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), 4.3.4-18. Further Shakespearean references will be to this edition of the *Complete Works*.



not. The demands on each one are different. The translation by Ricardo Alberti is an academic one, good for reading, good when it was made. But, for the stage, today, it is outdated, if only because of the vocabulary, a number of formal features, and a host of small details. Working on *King Lear*, we had to make so many changes that any similarity between our text and the previous translation would be a mere coincidence. Ricardo Alberti's translation of *King Lear* had long sentences, used an opaque vocabulary, and was characterized by many dated turns of phrase that would no longer be understood today. I had to make the text more direct, and much stronger. Richard Cottrel, the director, wanted the vocabulary to be muscular, violent, aggressive, and Alberti's certainly had none of these qualities. Our overhaul was particularly drastic in Act 3, scene 2. As we opted for stronger words, in terms of meaning and sense, we learnt that their sound, based upon open vowels and diphthongs, in quick succession helped to underpin the violence of the tempest.

The first major change we had to make was to cut the translation we had: Richard Cottrel did not want a conflated version of the two texts of *King Lear*: he wanted to work with the Quarto text. And so we did with the exception of the Fool's speech from the Folio:

This is a brave night to cool a courtesan.  
 I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:  
 When priests are more in word than matter,  
 When brewers mar their malt with water,  
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors,  
 No heretics burned, but wenches' suitors;  
 Then shall the realm of Albion  
 Come to great confusion.  
 When every case in law is right;  
 No squire in debt nor no poor knight;  
 When slanders do not live in tongues,  
 Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;  
 When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,  
 And bawds and whores do churches build,  
 Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,

That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time.

(3.2.79-96)

The Folio, it seemed to me, provided a more attractive conclusion for the character of the Fool than the simple exit he has in Q. Cottrel accepted my suggestion.

Cottrel also wanted a very distinct relationship between some words and their Portuguese counterparts. Words like “rascal,” “boy,” “knave,” “slave,” and “rogue.” So we started to compile a lexicon, which quite soon proved to be inadequate: you cannot establish a very rigid relationship because the same words do not apply to the all occurrences. A different problem was Alberti’s approach to translating metaphors into Portuguese. Choosing to explain them rather than convey them as metaphor, he literally submerged Shakespeare’s concisely phrased ideas in a sea of words. We got back to the original, short images. We cut the foliage and preserved just the strong core lines of each utterance. In the case of insults, we chose stronger ones as well. And so we went through the text, trying to make it more flexible as well as more compact and shorter, so that the words were less opaque and more potent, to provide a more solid basis for the tough production that Cottrel envisaged. I think we succeeded.

My final example as a translator of Shakespeare concerns *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Here, it really concerned an adaptation of the early comedy undertaken at the request of a colleague who teaches at a secondary school. His students had heard of Shakespeare in their English classes and considered the playwright “a bore.” So we decided to show them that the allegedly boring early modern playwright could be fun. The idea was to make them enjoy performing it, and in this way to make their colleagues at the school enjoy it as well. Although it was an amateur performance, the results of this interesting enterprise were quite thrilling.

In brief, I just took the love plots, cutting all the characters with the exception of the four pairs of lovers, and kept Boyet and Costard

(who were played by the same actor).<sup>10</sup> Clearly, this was not a “proper” translation. The first problem I had to face was, once more, the dense, poetic language. How can you make secondary school students understand images like:

And I forsooth in love, I that have been love’s whip  
A very beadle to a humorous sigh;

(3.1.172-73)

they have measured many a mile  
To tread a measure with you on this grass;

(5.2.184-85)

you have a double tongue within your mask  
And would afford my speechless vizard half;

(5.2.245-46)

Fair in all hail is foul.

(5.2.340)

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* presents some of the most elaborate puns and wordplay of the entire Shakespearean canon. It was a risk to choose such a difficult play and turn it into a sort of propaganda exercise for Shakespeare in Portugal, but decided to go on with it. I “translated” the play’s images into a language that sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds could understand, but without making it too familiar or colloquial. After all, these were princes and princesses speaking!

After all the cuts, I was left with a play of about an hour: I had to put some lines from other characters into the mouths of Boyet and Costard to have the plot make sense, and I had some difficulties with the story of the swapped letter. But after all the twisting and bending, I ended up with a play that made sense, that was fun and, most of all, dealt with a theme that the students knew well: love problems.

<sup>10</sup> *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, edited by Richard David, in *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works* (1998).

At first, when rehearsals started, the students were a somewhat resistant, but soon they began to enjoy it and became proud of the fact that they were playing Shakespeare. Once again, the name of the playwright played an important part in the process. The “boring classic” was transformed into “a renowned and very important playwright.”

Although the new comedy ended with Berowne’s metadramatic statement that a year’s delay in their courtship would be “too long for a play” (5.2.838), the students did not find it long or boring; they enjoyed performing it as well as seeing it, and would not have objected to more of the same. And there were good laughs from the audience during the various performances. I do not, therefore, repent having translated as well as adapted this Shakespeare play so drastically: the students may have seen a very ghost of the play, but they got accustomed to the name of the playwright and discovered a new way of looking at his texts. Perhaps, one day, they will go to the theatre to see a full-length play.

While translating for the theatre, I cannot forget that I am not independent. I am an employee of the director who can either leave me free hand, or impose conditions. João Perry, the director of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* wanted me to render the play in twentieth-century urban Portuguese. João Mota, who directed *Measure for Measure*, wanted me to follow the cuts made by Peter Brook for the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, whereas Richard Cottrel, with whom I worked on *King Lear*, wanted a tougher, more muscular language and a closer correspondence between the terms of both languages. The changes I was asked to make for *Love’s Labour’s Lost* exceeded all. As a translator, I had to do whatever the director wanted. Curiously, though, instead of making my work as a translator an unpleasant task, as any outsider might think, I found that all those directorial demands made the enterprise more challenging, more interesting, though certainly not easier.

It is not for me to say whether my translations of the plays of Shakespeare are “belles” or even good, but I do not think they are “in-

*fidèles*.” Shakespeare was a man of the theatre. He wrote for his own audience, and wanted his plays to be enjoyed by those who filled The Theatre and The Globe over the years. While effecting all those transformations, committing all those little “acts of treason,” I, as a translator kept the theatrical origins of Shakespeare’s plays in mind, and this is why, occasionally, I would prefer meaning to form. My faithfulness was to the playwright rather than to the poet.

# A Palimpsest, or an Image of a Mutilated Statue

## The Experience of Translating Shakespeare

Maria João Pires

In an essay entitled *La Traduction de la lettre*, Antoine Berman defines translation as the finding-and-seeking of the break in the rule “*le non-normé*” in the maternal language, so as to insert there the foreign language and its pattern of speech.<sup>1</sup> This difficult and paradoxical reciprocity is nowhere better illustrated than in a letter by St. Jerome, author of the Vulgate and usually called the patron saint of translation. Even while recommending translation as the finding of a “comparable mode of expression,” Epistle 106 preserves the Greek within the Latin, and sets the two languages vibrating together: “*hanc esse regulam boni interpretis, ut linguae alterius suae linguae exprimat proprietatem*” (“this is the rule of a good translator, that he presses out [= expresses] the other language in the special manner of his own language”).<sup>2</sup> Our claim as translators is an ambitious one: we all want to find this “special manner” in our own language. As the problems of translation are infinite, so should be the confessions of translators: communication by translation is never truly achieved, which at the same time means that it is never inexorably impossible either. In

<sup>1</sup> Antoine Berman, “La Traduction de la lettre ou l’auberge au lointain,” *Les Tours de Babel: Essais sur la traduction* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ Repress, 1985), 141

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, *Selected Letters*, translated by F. A. Wright, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 85.

finishing this prelude, I will give an account of some of the phases which, for me, characterized the task of translating Shakespeare.

In his famous essay on “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin states that the highest claim for translation is that it allows “the light of pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully.”<sup>3</sup> Although I have difficulties with the construction of “pure” language, I would add that this aim should not be pursued with a dichotomy in mind between form and content. Both the consideration of content as an “inner presence” or spirit and the mechanical understanding of form are dangers for a good translation. We have all read translations of poems which kept rhyme and metre, but made it hard to believe that the poem was worth any attention to start with. When Benjamin speaks of translation as a “reproduction of form” his understanding of form is the intentionality of the work (the “*Art des Meinens*,” as Benjamin has it) rather than any rhyme scheme. In this respect, we could translate Benjamin’s word for reproduction – “*Wiedergabe*” – literally, as a “re-giving” of form, and in this way stress that the original form has to be destroyed before it can be reshaped. Thus, translating involves envy, usurpation, as well as destruction. Although I promise to make reparation by working to restore the destroyed beauty in my language, I almost take over the action of time and demolish the form of the original work, making it mine:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea, and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never.  
Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe,  
Into hey nonny nonny.  
Sing no more ditties, sing no mo,

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 79.

Of dumps so dull and heavy,  
The fraud of men was ever so,  
Since summer first was leafy.  
Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe,  
Into hey nonny nonny.<sup>4</sup>

A Canção

Não suspireis, damas, não suspireis,  
Os homens foram sempre enganadores:  
Um pé no mar, outro em terra,  
Nunca constantes à mesma coisa.  
Não suspireis, deixai-os ir,  
E sede gentis e alegres,  
Convertendo vossos sons de dor  
Num tra lare lare.

Não canteis mais, não canteis mais  
São dolentes e tristes:  
A fraude dos homens sempre foi assim,  
Desde que o verão se ergueu.  
Não suspireis pois, etc.

The destruction is enormous: sound, sense, form, reference will never again stand in the same relation to each other. As I said above, it is always very difficult to keep rhyme, metre and the full sense of the original work. Being a Latin language, Portuguese obeys to a completely different structure. And, although I had an option where rhyme prevailed, I have decided to contemplate sense and an identical cultural choice of words. The final product was certainly something which could perfectly suit fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Portuguese literature, whereas obeying strictly to sound and sense would give me a popular, very simple, and unliterary result.

<sup>4</sup> *Much Ado about Nothing*, edited by F. H. Mares, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.3.53-68. All further references to the play will be to this edition.



No matter what your theory is, you have to break apart this natural fusion of elements and, unlike in writing, you must build a theory because you constantly have to make conscious decisions as to which elements of the original you will privilege. But destruction is part of the process of creation and certain structures are particularly vulnerable to the action of translation: wordplay, passages which develop from the potential of the particular language (a case in point is 5.2 of *Much Ado about Nothing*).

In this passage as elsewhere, Shakespeare posits language, the English language, as the basis of our thinking. Why does there seem to be a close relation between rhyming words? Perhaps because they have a surprising number of letters in common. It was essential to find words in Portuguese which overlap at least somewhat in their letters, rather than keeping the literal equivalents for “lady” and “baby,” “scorn” and “horn,” or “school” and “fool,” which only share very few letters, making it impossible to establish their connection on the basis of a linguistic closeness. I have tried to find words close enough to the semantic field of the original, trying to parallel the rhyme:

I mean in singing, but in loving – Leander the good swimmer, Troilus, the first employer of panders, and a whole book full of these quondam carpet-mongers, whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse, why they were never so truly turned over and over as my poor self in love: marry, I cannot show it in rhyme, I have tried: I can find out no rhyme to lady but baby, an innocent rhyme: for scorn horn, a hard rhyme: for school fool, a babbling rhyme: very ominous endings. No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.

(*Much Ado about Nothing*, 5.2.23-31)

Piedade como poeta, porque no amor, Leandro, o bom nadador, Tróilo, o que primeiro recorreu a alcoviteiros, e a longa lista desses antigos cavaleiros de salão, cujos nomes ainda deslizam suavemente pelo caminho dos versos brancos, nunca foram tão maltratados pelo amor como a minha pobre pessoa. É-me impossível mostrar o meu amor

em rimas. Tentei. Para dama não encontro outra rima senão trama – rima inocente; para desdém, bem – rima dura; para escola, sacola, rima redonda;<sup>5</sup> terminações ominosas! Não, não nasci sob um planeta poético, nem posso fazer a corte a alguém em termos festivos.

Here again, and because I was dealing with word-play, I tried to consider an identical musical effect in Portuguese. In this way, “*dama*,” “*desdém*,” and “*escola*” really mean “lady,” “scorn,” and “school,” but then I have searched for a good rhyming effect and that took me to words which escape the original meaning. And because in the original, sense has no special relevance (the character meant to play freely with words) I have done exactly the same. I substituted a different kind of sound repetition, thus keeping present through sound what is declared. I cannot say whether this is an example of success or failure but there were certainly times when I could not find an approximation and was tempted to leave the wordplay in English.

1 WATCHMAN

Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal, for they can read and write.

(*Much Ado about Nothing*, 3.3.11-12)

I rendered the “original” English sentence as:

PRIMEIRO GUARDA

Hugo Oatcake, senhor, ou Jorge Seacoal, porque ambos sabem ler e escrever.

Much discussion of translation focuses on this kind of salient problem. I think that the quality of a translation is not to be measured by the solution to this type of difficulty. It is possible to have brilliant equivalents and still produce a translation which misses the tone or rhythm of the work.

Although on the conscious level there are thousands of small

<sup>5</sup> In the original – “lady”/“baby”; “scorn”/“horn”; “school”/“fool.”

decisions, the unit of translation is not the word, nor even the line or sentence. Thinking in terms of the whole work, if you cannot do what the original does where it does it, you can at least do similar things in other places. That is to say, you can rotate which aspect you privilege in each micro-decision and in this way approximate the original at least as a whole. Here one has to consider that the unit is even larger, that it includes what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the “third dimension” of a work of literature:

Nothing that is said has its truth simply in itself, but refers instead backward and forward to what is unsaid. Every assertion is motivated, that is, one can sensibly ask of everything that is said, “Why do you say that?” And only when what is not said is understood along with what is said is an assertion understandable.<sup>6</sup>

Gadamer stresses the importance of silence, in philosophical as well as literary terms, in the white spaces of the text, the margins that let the words breathe. Gadamer accepts Plato’s definition of thought as “the inner dialogue of the soul with itself” (Gadamer, 67). Writing and translating as dialogue are familiar metaphors. In writing, it is not so much the future reader as language itself, or the potential work which in this process gradually assumes shape. In translating, it is more than just the original which gradually assumes a shape. We can take Gadamer’s “unsaid” (Gadamer, 67) in two different ways.

On the one hand, we may read it as the “other,” non-human, as everything that challenges us who are defined by language, by the word. On this level, the crucial act is to engage, through the nearly infinite space of language, in a dialogue with its final limits. It is not very important whether we do this in the space of our own language or in the space created by the tension between the limits of a piece of writing and two languages.

On the other hand, and by contrast, we can take Gadamer’s

<sup>6</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, translated by David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 67-68.

“unsaid” not as the ultimate silence, but as that which is potentially sayable within a language. It is a space for the utterance rather than an ultimate limit. Curiously, Gadamer’s example for the person who does not fully understand the silent, motivational background, is that of the translator. As a consequence, in translations this space, this third dimension, becomes felt through its absence:

Everybody knows how the translation makes what is said in the foreign language sound flat. It is reflected on one level, so that the word sense and sentence form of the translation follow the original, but the translation, as it were, has no space. It lacks that third dimension from which the original is built up in its range of meaning. This is an unavoidable obstruction of all translation.

(Gadamer, 68)

“The” translation exists even less than “the” poem or “the” story. Some translations make what is said sound flat and some do not. But there remains the interesting notion of the motivational background of the literary work. Gadamer’s use of “space” has always been one of the main senses of language. Changing language from English to Portuguese made me particularly aware of moving into a different space or, rather, into and between two spaces. In translating, I was letting another person’s space invade me, or, in turn, was pushing into the author’s space, trying to reach something like its centre, the point of the work’s conception.

The space of the “unsaid” can be explored: the translator should have read as much as possible around the work in order to get a feeling for the language, for the literary and cultural contexts of the original and, most importantly, perhaps, for the relation of the work to its linguistic and cultural contexts. This could be called a kind of “pre-dialogue” with the work in the course of which the translator should not limit his/her reading to works explicitly or implicitly part of the tradition of the original. Although we cannot find an equivalent tradition for Shakespeare in Portuguese literature, it is useful to include in one’s reading list works that seem to stand in a similar

“motivational space” – the late medieval Portuguese drama of Gil Vicente (1465), which is the first dramatic literary expression in the Portuguese tradition. In a text dated 1522, Gil Vicente distinguishes three different categories in his own work, including comedy: “*comedias, farças y moralidades*” (“comedies, farces, and moralities”).<sup>7</sup> This is one of numerous examples of the importance of medieval religious traditions in Portuguese drama. I would say that the translator should read or just know as much as possible in both languages. The translator should at least be conscious of the cultural “air” that the original author breathes, of the differences and affinities between the two cultural contexts. For I think that far from not having a space, translation stands in a very complex space which includes the “unsaid” potential of both languages and their relation to one another, as well as that which is said in the original work and rendered unsaid by the translation.

This would mean that the destructive phase of translating does not just break apart elements and melt them down, but that it pushes the work out of the boundaries of the said into the creative energy where the work was conceived, where the author’s dialogue with the infinite space of language originally took place. Only there can it take place again, as a more complex dialogue with the original and its space, as well as with the space of the translator’s language. It is only there that the translator can become the “one saying it again.”

In order to achieve this, the translator, says Gadamer, “must never copy what is said, but place himself in the direction of what is said (i.e., in its meaning) in order to carry over what is to be said into the direction of his own saying” (Gadamer, 70). This sense of transitivity, of direction and intention, is a helpful orientation for the translator. It makes way for a complex understanding of form as the relation in which the original stands to its language and traditions, its motivational space, but it also enables an opportunity of finding a

<sup>7</sup> Jacinto do Prado Coelho, *Dicionário de Literatura*, 3 vols. (Porto: Figueirinhas, 1976), vol. III, 1166.

way of recreating, or at least echoing, this relation in the translator's language and tradition.

But then comes the time when you as translator retreat from the scene of your defeat: a miraculous flush of fluency suddenly overwhelms you as you come to realize what it was you should have said back there and then. If the words do not come too late, you keep going back with the hope of rectifying all your failures. This must be one of the most disquieting episodes in the life of a translator – the moment at which he or she goes back to a text which seems to cry out for revision or rectification, and whose deficiencies yet lie on the printed page ready to be inspected and dissected. At this point we would like to correct all the errors that seem to multiply – the lines that have been dropped, the word that refuses to shape up, the infelicities or impossibilities of rhythm and rhyme.

The situation I am describing here – and I am basing this on my own experience of translating Shakespeare – involves a sense of melancholy which, as far as I know, is peculiar to translators: given the inevitably “secondary” or “derivative” nature of the enterprise, the awareness we engage in is always belated, always provisional, always contingent. To me, at least, the most interesting translations are not those that fix or ground their originals, but those that somehow manage to leave them somehow “up in the air,” to suspend them, for that precarious and precious instant in which original and translation miraculously collide. On one hand, I am referring to a kind of nostalgia for the period when every decision still lay open to revision, a period in which the very process of translation, of discovery, of experiment, seemed to matter far more than its eventual completion. On the other hand, I look back on what I have done and, far from seeing it irrevocably fixed in some final printed form, I watch it unravel in front of my eyes. As I completed my translation – but is a translation ever “complete”? – I had more or less succeeded in covering the text I had chosen; the translation seemed more or less

completely to have “covered” the original.<sup>8</sup> Text covers text in a palimpsest. Indeed, so absorbed was I in getting my versions just right that in the end I could barely see or hear the original any longer: Shakespeare’s English had been almost completely obscured, blocked out, covered by the Portuguese that I had so laboured to put in its place.

Benjamin’s “Task of the Translator” speaks of this process in terms of the essential historicity of literary works – their “*Fortleben*” or “*Überleben*” or “*Nachleben*,” that is, the way in which works of the past continue to survive, or pursue afterlives. Translations, Benjamin argues, are the crucial vehicles of this posthumous survival:

In its afterlife the original undergoes a change. Even words with fixed meanings undergo a process of maturation or decomposition. What once sounded fresh may later come to sound hackneyed; what was once modern may someday sound archaic.

(*Illuminations*, 73)

Benjamin insists that the original is in no way fixed; as it moves through the various avatars of its afterlife, it is subject to any number of ramifications. And the same holds true to translations. Benjamin notes:

Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birthpangs [or deathpangs] of its own.

(*Illuminations*, 74)

Benjamin underlines the instability that characterizes the life of both the original and its translations. If the original is conceived as a historical process moving through time, the translation in turn merely becomes a momentary point of convergence along this path, a point

<sup>8</sup> The term “cover” here involves implications of protection, concealment, and mastery.

that will soon be left behind in the dust. Benjamin rejects the view of translation as a mode of representation, reproduction, or mimesis in favour of a more “figural” approach (hence his affinity to theorists as Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida). Instead, we should search for a resemblance or equivalence between translation and original. We should make them participate in an exchange that, ideally, will serve to liberate the space that lies in between the two – much as Stéphane Mallarmé insists that it is the blanks, the margins, the silences that make the poem.

As I now look back on my translation of Shakespeare, it is above all the space between my Portuguese and his English that continues to occupy me. If I take up the play and my own rendering of the text of *Much Ado about Nothing*, it is the intervening whiteness between the texts that attracts my eye and, especially, Shakespeare’s original in which, from time to time, I can see the faint traces of my own words reaching through the palimpsest.



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# Practically Speaking

## On Translating *Hamlet*

António M. Feijó

How do you go about translating Hamlet's aggressive, bawdy sally against Ophelia "Do you think I meant country matters?"<sup>1</sup> You may, of course, write an explanatory footnote, and solve the pun in the passage, but that will also show you were incapable of solving the crux textually, and you don't want to do that. Or, at least, not just yet, since, as we all know, if you are in the business of translating, or of merely being a moral person, perseverance keeps honour bright. In my case, when I translated *Hamlet*, I adopted two or three simple guidelines, which, being clearly shorn of the dignity of theoretical principles, were explicitly devised as mere rules of thumb. Let me recapitulate them here.

The basic unit in equivalence sought between the original and the translation is the line: a single line in the original ought to be rendered by a single line in the translated text. If a complex syntactic clause takes up a large number of lines in the original, the isomorphism sought after in the translation will still be grounded in the unit line. A clause stretching over, say, six and a half lines which comes to a stop in an artfully deferred predicate will in the translation have the same length and will also come to a close in its long deferred predicate. Straightforward as the rule may seem, it may have, I fear, large implications. When, in the course of translating, a clause of this sort

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1986), 3.2.115-16.

presented itself, staggered through a long enjambment, and tantalizingly deprived of a predicate for a considerable stretch, I would translate along and hope for the best, that the predicate would materialize at the end, and not prove a syntactical misfit requiring retroactive changes in the translation. As such cases proved do-able, the equivalence of syntactical structure in the original and the translation seemed to be an argument in favour of the notion of a universal grammar determining all natural languages, and a practical refutation of a contrary notion according to which every utterance is a performance irreducible to any generic and abstract description. And if such a claim seems too broad, as such a neat dovetailing of syntactic structures is not obtainable in, say, translations of *Hamlet* into Japanese, or so I will presume, a weak, modular version of the argument of how, at this level, grammar trumps rhetoric will probably do the trick. We may then provisionally confine such salient homologies to that set of intertranslatable languages characterized by alphabetic systems of graphic linearity.

Although, as a translator, this theoretical hat doesn't really fit me, allow me, before I doff it for good, to belabour the point. The point being, of course, in this and some other related contexts, the uses of grammar. Consider, for example, the nearly unanimous litany current in Portugal against a method of teaching Camões's *The Lusads* in school. We are told that the method is perverse because it consists, almost exclusively, in the grammatical parsing of lines, and thus deadens any perception of the living poetry. Although this is, of course, but a version of one of the most worn-out indictments of criticism, that critics murder to dissect, with the interesting, if doubtful, corollary here that, were it not for such pedagogical shenanigans, students would become readers of Camões for life, a wildly optimistic conjecture at best, the point is worth taking up briefly.

First, it is not immediately evident what an alternative method of reading which would ignore scanning the grammatical form of the text might be, unless we assume that the reader has access to a kind of immaterial intuitions which make negligible the words that pre-

sumably support them. Because translation can't afford to ignore such grammatical scanning – is, in fact, besides other things, indistinguishable of such a move – the translated text is a decisive and flagrant interpretation of the original. “Interpretation” is being used here in a modest, if, within its limits, robust, sense. It is the unexceptionable claim that translation, *a fortiori* the translation of a text from the past, is a ground-level attempt to establish the literal sense of a text. It is, therefore, as it is too often hastily claimed, a move which may take place within a single language or between two different languages. (This is the case not because translation obtains across the board of linguistic and cultural transactions, a position which I will not address here, but because in dealing with a particular text translation and interpretation are one and the same.) Hermeneutics, the theory of the understanding and interpretation of texts, seems, in fact, to have been originally devised as a theory of translation. Here is Peter Szondi on the genesis of hermeneutics:

generally considered to have originated in the efforts of the Athenians of the classical period to establish the literal sense of the words of the Homeric epics, the language of which was no longer accessible to them, [...] [h]ermeneutics is thus, in the first place, a discipline designed to mediate successive stages of a language.<sup>2</sup>

The twin tasks of the translator are, it would seem, to fix the literal sense of a text and to ponder practically its aging.

Lest this become too assertive, let me rapidly return from the serene sky of theory to my few rules of thumb. These, as you will have noticed in my description of the first, are intended as a set of constraints. (They work very much like rhyme or metre in applied poetics.) Thus, it would seem that a textual segment which in the original is obscure, exhibits a breach of style in light of any known

<sup>2</sup> Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 95.

diction, or is an ostensive swerve from the textual or language norm, should exhibit these very same characteristics in translation. (The risk lies, of course, in the critical reception of the translated text, as reviewers may unwittingly decide to kill the messenger, blaming him for the author's vagaries.) Consider, for example, a notorious crux in 3.2.135: "Marry, this is miching malicho. It means mischief," a line unintelligible to nearly all native English speakers. According to Harold Jenkins, "miching" is more straightforward than the *OED*'s reticence seems to imply, a "present participle formation from the common verb to *mich*, lurk, be (furtively) up to mischief." Florio, authoritative because a contemporary of Shakespeare, lists "to miche, to shrug, or sneake in some corner" (Jenkins, 505). As to "malicho," Malone's eighteenth-century conjecture that it is a noun adopted from the Spanish *malhecho*, meaning "mischief," has long become consensual. The linguistic crux is further compounded by the unstable reference of Hamlet's line: is he referring to the performance of the dumb-show? to the plot of the dumb-show? to any of the particular actions depicted in the dumb-show, and, if so, which? The drastic swerve of the line from the idiomatic norm, or, if the notion of a "norm" sounds too Platonic to you, from nearly all perceptible, registered use, must find a counterpart in the translation. This justifies, I think, the opacity or exoticism of the version I decided to settle for: "*Hum, isto é malfário michado. Quer dizer malfeito.*"

An identical set of constraints applies to the prosodic and musical templates informing the original verse. An abrupt or repetitive rhythm, for instance, should have an abrupt or repetitive counterpart in translation, and all passages rhymed in the original, either as couplets at the end of a scene, or, at length, in the text of the play-within-the-play, ought, of course, to be rhymed too. Finally, the same applies to the several exceptions to the author's typical line, the iambic pentameter, which, because of the unbridgeable disparity between a syllabic and an accentual-syllabic system, may only serve as a fluid pattern of emulation. Boris Tomachevskij's remark on Pushkin's iambic pentameter seems to me an apt model of what is to be

aimed at: "The problem of rhythm lies not in conformity to imaginary metres; it lies rather in the distribution of expiring energy within the arc of a single impulse – the line itself."<sup>3</sup> In this case, the criterion adopted in the translation was to condense the semantic implications of any line in the original within a single translated line, to contain the garrulous expressiveness invited by an overly ingenious discourse, and to adjust the text to a graphic display which would fill up the page in regular fashion.

An attempt to establish the literal sense of a text must rely on grammar. But in any intentional object, such as a literary text, thought is indistinguishable from language. The imputation of a particular thought to a particular statement is, however, heavily dependent on history's intervening antics. As an example, consider another notorious crux in the play when, in 5.2.290, Gertrude comments on Hamlet's flustered looks in his duel with Laertes: "He's fat and scant of breath." Nearly all editions of the play gloss "fat" here as meaning "sweaty." This is how Jenkins defends such a view:

In association with "scant of breath" *fat* must refer to Hamlet's state at the moment rather than to a permanent characteristic, and the offer of a "napkin" to wipe his face indicates what his state is.<sup>4</sup>

"Must," in this passage is, of course, emptily assertive, and the offer of a napkin is not dependent on any particular meaning of the word, as many such meanings, including that which *prima facie* we would ascribe to "fat," will fit the conditions of the utterance. Jenkins is thus led to conclude, after quoting a few inconclusive analogues, that "no certain and authenticated parallel has been given for *fat* as epithet for the condition, rather than the cause, of sweating" (569). If,

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Boris Eichenbaum in "The Theory of Formal Method," in *Théorie de la littérature*, edited by Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965), 59 (my translation).

<sup>4</sup> *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, 568-69.

persisting in our attempt to save “fat” from “fat,” we now appeal to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we will find, in fact, a sub-meaning of the word “fat” which denotes “sweaty.” But the *OED*’s authority is here viciously circular, as the first historical occurrence it lists for this particular sub-meaning is, in fact, this very same line of *Hamlet*.

The nearly universal reading of “fat” as “sweaty” may then be read, instead, as the corollary of a cultural conspiracy. In the terms of such a conspiracy, the figure of a brilliant and depressive intellectual, as paradigmatically embodied by Hamlet, can only be thin. Consider, as a lone instance of this saturated field of reference, William Butler Yeats’ reference in his poem “The Statues” to a “Hamlet thin from eating flies.”<sup>5</sup> Examples abound of such a subtle construction of thinness as bodily exposure and openness to insight. I will mention two instances, which I first quoted elsewhere, of such a conflation of physiology and epistemology. Here’s V. S. Pritchett on Smollett: “his coarseness, like that of Joyce, is the coarseness of one whose senses were unprotected and whose nerves were exposed.”<sup>6</sup> And here’s David Hume on Rousseau, whom he depicts as a heady mixture of Hamlet and Lear:

He has only felt during the whole course of his life; and in this respect his sensibility rises to a pitch beyond what I have seen any example of... He is like a man who were stript not only of his clothes, but of his skin, and turned out in that situation to confront with the rude and boisterous elements.<sup>7</sup>

The loaded ideological field intimated by these examples does not, of

<sup>5</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 375. The line probably alludes to *Hamlet* 3.1.93-94: “I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.”

<sup>6</sup> V. S. Pritchett, *The Living Novel* (New York: Random House, 1964), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Dr. Blair of March 25, 1766, quoted in Irving Babbitt’s *The New Laokoon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 112. See also Elias Canetti’s remarkable analysis of the import of Kafka’s thinness on his writing: *Kafka’s Other Trial* (New York: Schocken, 1982), 22-23.

course, preclude the possibility that we may decide to read “fat” here as meaning “fat.” Interestingly enough, in this case, literality clearly goes against the grain of culture. My reasons to take the difficult path of literality lie, however, less in the indulgence of a modish culturalist fervour in denouncing thinness, or, alternatively, endorsing fat, than in old-time philological considerations. An internal irony in the language-field of the play seems, in fact, to undo the usual reading of the line. When the Ghost, that highly infectious figure who triggers the catastrophe which will victimize most of the characters involved, exhorts Hamlet to take revenge in 1.5.32-34, he says that he finds his son “apt” for the task, adding in sombrely persuasive fashion: “And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed / That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf, / Wouldst thou not stir in this” (“*Pois mais tórpido serias que a erva gorda / Que especiosa lavra raízes na margem do Letes, / Se não te envolveras nisto*”).

Notice that in all cases so far listed no considerations of reference have come up. Nearly all problems of translation are problems which pertain to equivalences sought between words, to controlled slippages of linguistic use, or to willed condensations of meaning. (“Translation” applies here to the translation of texts such as *Hamlet*. I am not pressing any claim on any other kind of translation, or on a unifying mode subsuming all such kinds.) But even in *Hamlet* considerations of reference press themselves, although, as will be presently seen, they very quickly reduce to a relation between words. Here’s the Gravedigger to his companion, before bursting into song: “Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor” (5.1.60). This is glossed, typically, I should add, by G. R. Hibbard, the editor of the 1987 Oxford edition, as follows: “One of the play’s minor mysteries, Yaughan was, presumably, a tavern-keeper operating in or near the Globe.”<sup>8</sup> Since I can’t help agreeing that, in this case, reference is, or

<sup>8</sup> *Hamlet*, edited by G. R. Hibbard (1987. Rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 323.



seems to have become, inscrutable, I feel that the topical inscrutability of the line should persist in translation. I have accordingly rendered it as: “*Vá, vai ali ao Cambão e traz-me uma malga de vinho*” (which, should my translation ever be reprinted with explanatory footnotes of my choices of phrase [in, say, a possible world inhabited by lowly, irreducibly minor scribblers] would be glossed as “*Cambão*: unknown, one of the translation’s minor mysteries”). But cases of actual reference are few in number, and most aren’t similarly inscrutable. In 4.3.19–20, for example, Hamlet’s description of the dead Polonius as being at supper, a supper where he’s eaten, not where he eats, is an extended pun, riddling actual historical events, the 1521 meeting of the Diet of Worms in which Luther refused to recant his views before Charles V: “A certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet.” No footnote is required in translation, as the pun “worms”/ “Worms” in the original is similarly achieved in the translated coupling “vermes”/“Worms.” (The same goes for “diet.”)

But maybe I should hark back to the beginning and take up the translation of Hamlet’s verbal attack on Ophelia in the scene which precedes the performance of the play-within-the-play, the exchange, as you will recall, being the following: “[Hamlet:] Do you think I meant country matters? [Ophelia:] I think nothing, my lord.” As is well known, emphasis should be added in the expression “country matters” to the first half of the word “country,” disclosing a smuggled reference to one of the most brutal terms used in English to denote the female genitalia. This can be easily done in performance, as the actor lengthens his elocution of the first syllable, and makes the pun audible. On the page, however, the grim joke is not easily read off, and most editorial footnotes to the line consist in a see-here or nudge to the reader, calling his attention to what is a heavily documented, widespread pun. The whole dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia is, in fact, but a flurry of obscene points, which affects the most apparently innocuous words. “Nothing,” for example, in Ophelia’s answer to Hamlet’s pun, as well as, later, in one of Hamlet’s rejoinders. Many editors break the

word in two, spelling it “nothing,” thus making explicit the embedded reference to “thing,” a term denoting here the male sexual organ. This is not, of course, exactly news, as puns with “cunt” and “thing” are endemic in Elizabethan literature. (A brief survey of, for instance, Stephen Booth’s notes to his edition of the *Sonnets* would yield ample evidence.<sup>9</sup> The line nevertheless remains a crux for the translator. We may think that this case is just like that of any other pun, but one of the insistent topics of the play is, of course, the sufferance of a vivid imputation of raw sex to one’s mother, as toxic a result, in Hamlet’s case, as in some virulent instances of what Freud has called “the sexual enlightenment of children.” Should anyone wistfully yearn for Bowdler’s criteria to cleanse Shakespeare’s text of all such disturbances, or normalize them in translation, we would be forced to point out that the play *is* about such intractable matters. My translation of the line in question – [Hamlet]: “*Julgáveis que me referia a coisinhas pitorescas?* [Ofélia] *Não julgo coisa nenhuma, senhor*” – has been done, without the benefit of a footnote, at the expense of a slight anachronism (the first occurrence of “picturesque” in English is from 1703).

Allow me to conclude with a word or two about translation, and about translating Shakespeare. A great deal of talk about translation justifiably takes up the question of its possibility. Eloquent arguments for the incommensurability of languages, and therefore for the impossibility of translation, have, at times, gained considerable clout. Donald Davidson, for whom intertranslatability is a condition of languagehood, points out how in one of these arguments, Benjamin Lee Whorf’s essay on some verbal aspects of Hopi, the author, wanting to demonstrate that Hopi incorporates a metaphysic so alien to ours that Hopi and English cannot, as he puts it, “be calibrated,” uses English to convey the contents of sample Hopi sentences.<sup>10</sup> The implied trust in translatability in Davidson’s argument is bracing.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Lee Whorf, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 184.

Even if confronted with a text deemed impossible to translate, we should consider it a contingent, empirical matter that the text hasn't yet been translated, and that a later increase in the general supply of talent will see to it that it is. In the case of *Hamlet*, it is quite remarkable that we seem to be dealing with what can only be described as, in itself, an original translation. It is widely accepted that the 1603 First Quarto, the earliest extant edition of the text, reworks an earlier version of the play, variously conjectured as authored by Thomas Kyd, an unknown author, or Shakespeare himself. This *Ur-Hamlet* would be the original later translated as the *Hamlet* we all know. This point is not trivial and does, in fact, apply to nearly all of the plays, which consistently remake earlier texts (and may, of course, be extended further to include any text or utterance, but we need not be so inclusive). In such reworkings, the author becomes perceptible in the different quanta of energy, unequally affecting rhetoric and stance, which charge the several speeches in the play. From this point of view, given the conspicuous authorial investment in the negative heroics of the protagonist, *Hamlet* without Hamlet is indeed negligible.

Translations are translations of translations. Objectively, in the narrow sense just described of a lineage of versions of the "same" text, and, subjectively, in the stance which characterizes both author and translator. To consider that one of the tasks of the translator is to ponder the aging of the original, as I claimed earlier on, is to face a set of practical matters. How is a text of the past, so densely overlaid with the grime of culture, to be translated? Self-consciousness is not a virtue here, if anywhere. But, in fact, the translator need not fear. His tacit language equipment, which he cannot shed or make fully explicit to himself, will necessarily betray a particular state of a language. The translator's task is to line up words which, empirically, he is willing to proffer as a workable equivalent. No theory is of avail here, only a presumption of feasibility and a few crafty knacks for how to go on.

# The Translation of Proper Names

## in *Measure for Measure*

M. Gomes da Torre

The past three decades have witnessed an exceptional development in translation studies. Very few authors, however, deal with the practical issues of translation work proper, and prefer to discuss more abstract theoretical issues such as literal or communicative approaches, foreignising or domesticating solutions, conservative or post-colonial translation. Even books that claim to help translation students or practising translators lack that practical component with concrete examples that the translator might use as support on the frequent occasions when doubts assail him. The exception among the publications I know is Peter Newmark's work, especially his 1981 *Approaches to Translation*, where he does not obfuscate, but presents the reader with a number of relatively simple rules of thumb that can be applied to practical work.<sup>1</sup> Some such rules refer to the translation of proper names, be they anthropic, geographical, historical, or institutional. I have found these particularly helpful for my translation of *Measure for Measure*.

Before I turn to the translation of *Measure for Measure* in greater detail, let me make a few observations on the nature of proper names and the role they play in normal communication. According to Manini – and his opinion cannot be easily contradicted – proper names are not normally ruled by morphological rules. Since their task

<sup>1</sup> Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981).

is to identify, they have no synonyms. Also, they “do not convey any descriptive content or connotations and do not specify any physical or personal traits of the person referred to, which makes it possible for totally different people to have the same name.”<sup>2</sup> Asked if these principles fully apply to proper names in literary works, the answer would be “yes” and “no.” It is “yes” because in numberless cases the writer gives his characters their names by choosing them from the list of names available in his language or in any other he knows. Apparently the chosen name is neutral, merely conventional, as happens when we take a novel like D. H. Lawrence’s *Love Among the Haystacks*, whose characters may be called Geoffrey, Maurice, Nellie, or Banford; or a play like Arthur Miller’s *A View From the Bridge*, where we are introduced to Mike, Louis, Catherine, Alfieri, and Marco. At this point, however, one may ask whether the writer’s choice is really so free from any influence, if he was not conditioned by any preferences, by personal taste, or even by having known people with the names he uses in his writing and associating them positively or negatively with the characters he creates. The answer is “no” when authors clearly choose what Theo Hermans calls “loaded names.”<sup>3</sup> In this case the purpose of the names is not merely to identify people but to characterize and connote them.

With regard to proper names, Newmark in his *Approaches to Translation*, writes:

The principle stands that unless a [...] person’s name already has an *accepted* translation it should not be translated but must be adhered to.  
(70; italics added)

The opaque word here is “accepted.” It is difficult to determine exactly what it means. Does the author simply refer to existing trans-

<sup>2</sup> Luca Manini, “Meaningful Literary Names: Their Forms and Functions, and Their Translation,” *The Translator* 2:2 (special issue edited by Dirk Delabastita) (Manchester: St Jerome, 1996), 161-62.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Manini, “Meaningful Literary Names,” 163.

lations? If he does, the mere fact of a name having once been translated does not mean that this particular translation won general or even major acceptance in order to be classified as “accepted.” If he means that people have got used to hearing and applying the translated name, then we may be nearer to the meaning of “accepted,” but even under this hypothesis, there may be those who do not adopt the translation in question. The very title *Measure for Measure* and its translations into Portuguese even though it does not exactly concern proper names, may be used to illustrate this argument. To my knowledge there have been, so far, three published translations of this play in Portuguese – one in Brazil and two in Portugal – and an unpublished translation used for the theatre. *Medida por Medida* was the translation given by the Brazilian Carlos Alberto Nunes in the mid-sixties, by Henrique Braga in the fifties, and quite recently by Maria João Rocha Afonso. In 1966, however, Luiz Francisco Rebello preferred *Dente por Dente* (a tooth for a tooth), a solution that evidently shows his disagreement with the other Portuguese translations in existence. Within the context of the project whose purpose is the translation into Portuguese of all the plays by Shakespeare I have been assigned the task of translating this problematic tragic-comedy, and I could not accept either of the translations of the play’s title. Apparently, in Newmark’s terms, *Medida por Medida*, adopted by three of the four translators, is the “accepted” translation. This seems confirmed by the fact that, even in the academic world, when anyone refers to the play in Portuguese the formula used is *Medida por Medida*. Luiz Francisco Rebello, though, does not seem to have liked it when he used a different solution. I myself did not like it, because the common speaker of Portuguese does not grasp the meaning of the phrase “*medida por medida*” as nobody uses it in Portuguese to convey either the biblical meaning of it, or any other. In other words, “*medida por medida*” means nothing to a native speaker of Portuguese, unless he is familiar with the translation of Shakespeare’s play. All this means is that if the translation is “accepted” by some and rejected by

others, Newmark's criterion of acceptance must be taken with a pinch of salt. Even so Newmark's rule has its force, and I was practically forced to "accept" the dominant translation because this was the opinion of the other members of the project. If I had kept my alternative title – *Olho por Olho*, An Eye for an Eye – I would have introduced something that new readers or theatre-goers would have had to get acquainted with.

More or less the same might be said about the names of characters in *Measure for Measure*. The ways in which translators have treated them vary considerably. Some have simply adopted the original forms, but there are also examples where one name has been translated differently by each individual translator. These considerations seem to legitimize the provisional conclusion that Newmark's argument about "the *accepted* translation" can hardly apply to the proper names in *Measure for Measure*, even though his "rule" can be considered a sound one, since it applies to numerous other cases, as he himself clearly documents.

As a translator of *Measure for Measure*, I found that Newmark continued to provide food for thought. Newmark complements the passage I have just commented on as follows:

In belles-lettres, names are normally translated only if, as in some plays, the characters and milieu are naturalized.

(70)

The crucial word here is "naturalized." In some versions of modern translation theory naturalization consists in rewriting the foreign text "in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic language and culture."<sup>4</sup> Is *Measure for Measure*

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Venuti, "The Reaction Against Modernism: Modern Italian Poetry and Anglo-American Translation Poetics." Published in Portuguese as "A Reacção contra o Modernismo: A Poessa Italiana Moderna *versus* a Poética Tradutológica Anglo-Americana," *Op. Cit.: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos* 3 (2000), 13-19.

likely to be naturalized? We know that Shakespeare chose a specific foreign setting for the action, Vienna, even though the majority of events and problems involved in the play are easily identifiable as English (not to speak of others that we might even call universal). This means that in Shakespeare's procedure there were two opposing movements, one foreignizing (Vienna), the other (predominantly) nationalizing (what the play is about), and there are many signs of such movements: a number of foreign/Latin names contrast with national/English names. Thus the dramatist himself seems to legitimize a nationalizing translation, at least to the extent that the translator may consider this appropriate. In other words, the names in *Measure for Measure* should be translated and this cited passage from Newmark applies to our case.

Still further down there is more precision in Newmark's recommendations:

There are Elizabethan and Jacobean comedies where the message is more important than the culture, and it should be said that the remoteness of the period justifies a translation of the proper names. (71)

The play I am dealing with is Elizabethan because it was written by an Elizabethan playwright and it is Jacobean as well because supposedly it was written when James I was king of England. As we are effectively moving ever further into the twenty-first century we comply with the third of Newmark's conditions, that is to say, remoteness. Everything encourages the translator to translate the proper names in this play.

Because the names of Latin root, such as Vicentio, Escalus, Angelo, Claudio, Lucio, Isabella, Mariana, and Francisca are very close to their Portuguese equivalents and can be classified under what Manini calls "conventional" and David Crystal "serious" names in



opposition to comic names,<sup>5</sup> I will not waste time discussing their translation, although it might be opportune to voice some considerations about inconsistencies in some of the published translations, where some of the names were given common Portuguese equivalents whereas others, for some unknown reason, were kept in their original forms.<sup>6</sup> The non-Latin names, which for mere convenience I will call “English,” at least some of them, fall into the area of the “untranslatability of wordplay” that Delabastita so exhaustively analyses in *There’s a Double Tongue*.<sup>7</sup> In fact such names were given the forms they have because Shakespeare intended to cause certain types of reaction on the part of prospective audiences and very clearly convey secondary semantic meanings. They are the loaded names Manini refers to and “have an element of wordplay in them.”<sup>8</sup> As in many other respects Shakespeare’s genius seems to have done that with total naturalness, which leaves the impression in the modern reader that all he needed to do was dip his quill into the inkstand, and everything would come out easily. Ambiguity and wordplay are recurrent in his plays, which poses very serious problems for the translator if he wants to transfer the intentional effects of such ambiguity and wordplay into the target text.

Delabastita defines wordplay as “the general name indicating the various textual phenomena (i.e. on the level of performance or *parole*) in which certain features inherent in the structure of the language used (level of competence or *langue*) are exploited in such a way as to establish a communicatively significant, (near-)simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar

<sup>5</sup> David Crystal, “Names, Names, Names,” *Around the Globe* 6 (1997), 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> One might also ask if the exoticism felt by Jacobean audiences in these names is not lost to the Portuguese readers/playgoers due to the proximity of Portuguese to the Italian/Spanish languages (see Manini, “Meaningful Literary Names,” 167).

<sup>7</sup> Dirk Delabastita, *There’s a Double Tongue: An Investigation into the Translation of Shakespeare’s Wordplay with Special Reference to “Hamlet”* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1993), 171-90.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Manini, “Meaningful Literary Names,” 163.

meanings (signifieds) and more or less similar forms (signifiers)."<sup>9</sup> It is precisely the establishment of this "communicatively significant, (near-)simultaneous confrontation of a least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings" that causes the translator so much trouble and very frequently confronts him with the prospect of untranslatability.

A curious thing about the names in *Measure for Measure* is that even in the foreign setting of Vienna, the "low-comedy people" (which is how W.W. Lawrence refers to them) were given such Anglo-Saxon names as Froth, Elbow, Mistress Overdone, and Abhorson, and strangest of all, to the gallery of prisoners that Pompey meets when he is sent to prison, all of them sounding as English as can be. My interpretation of this apparent inconsistency (between Viennese setting and Anglo-Saxon names) in the treatment of the names of the *Dramatis Personae* is that when Shakespeare really wanted to play with names he felt much more at ease in English than in any other language he might have known. And the coinage of humorous names, not only in *Measure for Measure*, is one of the areas where he exhibits all his amazing creative facility. Corresponding to Shakespeare's facility is the great difficulty that the translation of such names presents to the translator who wants to reproduce the original effect on his readers or, indirectly, on prospective playgoers, as I said above. And to make things even more difficult, Shakespeare uses some of the names at different points of the play to make malicious innuendos to which the translator must pay attention. In this essay, I will try to illustrate my point with reference, to begin with, to the names of Pompey, Mistress Overdone, and Abhorson, and compare my own solutions with those given by other translators.

Let us begin with Pompey. At first sight the translation of this name is quite simple. The Portuguese language has the name Pompeu, which, even though it is not very frequent, is the name that

<sup>9</sup> Delabastita, *There's a Double Tongue*, 57.

many a Portuguese carries as his own. And this was my first translation, as it was of those who have translated the play into Portuguese to date. However, one of the basic recommendations made by translation manuals to practising translators is that, before beginning the translating work one should read the whole text very attentively. This was, of course, what I did, but I do not seem to have done justice to the adverb (attentively) in the mentioned recommendation. In fact, there are two passages, one in Act 2, scene 1, and another in Act 3, scene 2, where the name of Mistress Overdone's tapster is associated with the historical Caesar's, who with Pompey and Crassus formed the first Roman triumvirate. In modern Portuguese history books, the name corresponding to the historical Pompey is not Pompeu, but Pompeio. Accordingly I had to correct my first translation in order to conform to the historical associations that Shakespeare exploited. None of the other Portuguese translations seem to have taken this into account. The obvious consequence for readers is that they will not understand the wordplay in the latter scene.

The other problematic name is Mistress Overdone. One cannot but wonder what was on Shakespeare's mind when he decided to call the bawd this name. There seems to be no doubt that she was well beyond her youthful years and had spent the best of her life mitigating the carnal impulses of her clients (Did not Lucio call her Madam Mitigation?). Each of the translators mentioned above treats the name differently. Rebello called her Dona Serôdia (Mrs. Lateone), a solution that emphasizes her age only; Henrique Braga did not translate at all and called her Senhora Overdone,<sup>10</sup> which means nothing to the Portuguese reader who does not understand English; Maria João Afonso called her Senhora Recozida, that is to say "over-cooked," one of the possible interpretations of the original word. However, in Act 2, scene 1, Escalus interrogates Pompey about what

<sup>10</sup> After the presentation of this paper Jean-Michel Déprats asked me why I did not keep the original form. If I did so, I would fail to transport into the Portuguese translation one of Shakespeare's important intentions.

he does for a living. In the course of the interrogation he asks the name of the tapster's mistress and if she had had "any more than one husband." Pompey's answer was:

Nine, sir; Overdone by the last.<sup>11</sup>

This statement poses some interesting questions about interpretation as a result of Shakespeare's clear playing with secondary semantic meanings that in part originate in the preposition *by*. With this "Overdone by the last" Pompey means two things simultaneously: (i) that Overdone was the surname of the lady's last husband and (ii) at the same time, he maliciously insinuates that she is definitely worn out, used until threadbare, that is, sexually, as a result of her husband's (over)use of her. In this latter instance the name could begin with a small "o," as it is no more than a simple past participle. But the fact is that it was spelt with a capital "O," and this should not be ignored by the translator.

On the face of all this, what the translator has to do is try to find a solution that maintains the double sense in this speech. Henrique Braga gave it the following translation:

Nove, meu senhor; Overdone foi o último.

(Nine, my lord; Overdone was her last).

As he did not try to find a Portuguese equivalent for the "lady's" surname, he could not do much more than this arrangement. But, no doubt, something was lost, and Shakespeare's tongue-in-cheek was not attended to, because the translator seems to have overlooked the preposition *by*. Rebello simply skipped this speech, as he did in rela-

<sup>11</sup> *Measure for Measure*, edited by J. W. Lever, in *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works*, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), 2.1.197-98. Further Shakespearean references will be to this edition of the *Complete Works*.

tion to many others, a strategy justified by the fact that his was not a translation but a free adaptation of the play.

Maria João Afonso was sensitive to the presence of the preposition when she gave Pompey's speech the following translation:

Nove, senhor; é Recozida do último.

(*Literally*: Nine, sir, overcooked from/by the last).

This is correct, and part of the wordplay, that is double entendre, is maintained. As a matter of fact this translation may mean that she is Recozida after her husband's name and also "*Recozida*" owing to overuse by him. My only objection to Recozida is that, being morphologically feminine, it does not fit a man. Senhor Recozido would be the accepted form; Senhor Recozida does not work. If the verb "*recozer*" were to be used, then "*Senhora Recozido*" would be a possible solution, but this was not the case.

In my translation I tried to transfer the original innuendo into the target language and to do so I was forced to alter the original translation I had given to Mistress Overdone, which was Dona Desgastada (Mistress Wornout). This would translate one of the senses of Overdone, which would do reasonably well had I nothing more to translate than just the list of *Dramatis Personae* and were there not that answer given by Pompey to Escalus. Besides the aspects focused on up to now there is another problem that originates in the nature of the Portuguese language where adjectives (and past participles) agree with the nouns they modify as to gender and number. Desgastada (my first translation for Overdone), ending in *a*, is feminine (as is Maria João Afonso's *Recozida*) and fits a feminine owner as Mistress Overdone is. However, it would not fit her husband, who is, of course, masculine, and therefore I had to search for another solution that would serve both the feminine and the masculine genders.

With this goal in mind, instead of an adjective I chose the noun "*Desgaste*," which means both the act and the result of wearing out. And so I arrived at the following result:

Nove, meu senhor; o Desgaste vem-lhe do último.

(Nine, sir, the wear out comes from the last).

Here, *Desgaste* can both perfectly be the husband's surname and express the condition in which the poor lady was left after her last marriage. I have the feeling, however, that, taken as a name in isolation, *Dona Desgaste* does not sound very natural. But it has two advantages: (i) it does not shock the hearer, and (ii) it conveys the two semantic values Shakespeare attributes to the name in Pompey's words, in this sort of word play.

Another problematic name for the translator is the executioner's. Abhorson is the result of the combination of semantic and phonological elements, each of them contributing meaning to the whole. In the first place there is the element *abhor*, something that perfectly fits a person whose job is to kill others and whom any reasonable person finds repugnant. It is not difficult to find a good Portuguese equivalent to convey this semantic value. But, when we read the man's name aloud, it may sound like "of whore's son," or son of a whore, again a label that fits an executioner well. The translation of this latter sense into Portuguese would be perfectly easy as our language is particularly rich in such lexical areas. I might even resort to a Portuguese sixteenth-century playwright, Gil Vicente (1465-1536?), who uses "fideputa," at least in one of his plays (*Auto da Barca do Inferno*). But the combination of the two senses in one word proved too difficult for me, and so I had to leave out one of them. Abominância is the name I gave, but it only carries the sense of repugnance that the profession deserves. As Gutt says "in translation there are situations which do not allow one to capture all values of the original. The translator has to decide which qualities of the original are most important and which ones one could miss out."<sup>12</sup> My problem here was that I was not able to decide in any principled manner which of

<sup>12</sup> Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2000), 113.

Abhorson's qualities (or, as is the case, defects) was more important. My decision, I must admit, was purely arbitrary.

Let me now move on to the names of Pompey's inmates: young Master Rash, Master Caper, Master Three-pile, young Dizy, young Master Deep-vow, Master Copperspur, Master Starve-lackey, young Drop-heir, lusty Pudding, Master Forthlight, brave Master Shootie, wild Half-can, and Pots. All these names are somewhat allegorical and certainly provoked the Jacobean audiences to laughter, as certainly most of Pompey's interventions in the play have done. Thus the least that the modern translator is expected to do is make his readers or those who see his translation on the stage laugh too, which is not easy if he tries to respect two fidelities: (i) to keep in mind that the action evolves in a remote setting; (ii) that the names he creates are allegorical to a certain extent and are easily identifiable by his prospective audience. It should be added that these names live by themselves, that is to say, they occur only once in the play and do not have the implications that the other names I dealt with so far have. The translator need not be attentive to any other passage in the comedy where some relation is established with these names, and instead of giving an open solution he must opt for a closed one, that is, all the effects he wants to obtain with his translation must be immediate, and this makes the task very difficult.

For reasons of space, I cannot go into detail about the translation of all these names. I will, therefore, pick out two by way of illustration: Master Starvelackey and brave master Shoetie. The former is absolutely transparent in what it means about the person it designates. The man had financial problems to a point that his servants died from lack of food. However the name Starvelackey has resonances of some pretension to aristocracy. Accordingly the translator must treat him with that degree of deference that such a personality is entitled to. I called him Unhas-de-Fome, a name that points more to the gentleman's stingy character than to his poverty. In any case the consequences to the lackey, be it poverty or avarice, would be the same, that is, he would suffer from hunger. To give the

name the aristocratic tone I detect in the English original, I used the preposition “de,” which in Portuguese is employed as a distinguishing mark of aristocratic surnames. Thus “senhor de Unhas-de-Fome” is where I got. Now if I were asked where the comic effect lies, I would say that it is in the contrast formed by the insulting “Unhas-de-Fome” and the preposition itself.

Shoetie is different. According to commentators this name stresses the adorning purpose that shoelaces had at the time. I do not think that a literal translation would do in this case. So, instead of underlying the shoelace I focused on the shoe, and as the man was “a great traveller,” I thought that a light/fast boot might serve the purpose. The result was “Senhor Botalesta” (Master Fastboot), which, I hope, will be seen by my prospective target audience as a humorous nickname.

To close, I must note that, in general, Newmark’s “rules” seem to work in the particular case of *Measure for Measure* as they probably do for other plays by Shakespeare, but the rule, perfect as it may be, will never solve in its totality the double entendre of meaningful names. Translators cannot escape their eternal curse: the unavoidable loss of meaning. Each case is a case, and its solution in translation is in most cases unique.



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# The Gender of Spirits

## Ariel and the Portuguese Audience

Fátima Vieira

In a good-humoured text on the theory of translation, the Brazilian Sérgio Bellei defines the so-called “traumatic tradition of translation.”

The traumatic tradition of translation is well-known and can briefly be summarised in terms of the trauma caused resulting from a certain nostalgia for the original. An original and origin exist which are traditionally seen as being authentic, true, unique and non-duplicable, and there exists a derivative of this original which is less authentic, false, disloyal and that in contrast to the original, can and ought to be repeated many times in an attempt to arrive at a version close to the original. The translation is thus marked by the trauma of some kind of absence, with something missing.<sup>1</sup>

As a translator of Shakespearean drama, I was also affected by the trauma described by Bellei. Translating *The Tempest* – which took around eighteen months – I never ceased to be alarmed by the idea that Portuguese readers would not be able to understand and appreciate this Shakespearean work through the words that I was choosing. The idea that I might be betraying a text, which, being canonical, could almost be regarded as sacred, led me to try and define a translation strategy that would justify my options.

<sup>1</sup> Sérgio Bellei, “‘Não bula comigo, nonhó!’: Tradução, Trauma, e (Pseudo)-Terapia,” *Cadernos de Tradução* 3 (Florianópolis: G. T. Tradução Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 1998), 49. Translation mine.

In the different texts on the theory of translation that I read, it was pleasing to note that with regard to the translation of literary texts, and poetry in particular, there is an optimistic attitude nowadays. But there are clearly two factions. There are those who maintain that it *is* possible to translate, they see translation as the act of re-creating the original, giving the translator a considerable degree of freedom. And there are those who see the act of translation as one of *conditioned interpretation*, given the way in which it consists of searching for a range of functional equivalents in the target language from those given in the source language. For this reason, those in the latter group believe that all translations are historically and ideologically compromised, working with a language that, in itself, is the reflection of a certain socio-historical context. Throughout my work on translating *The Tempest*, I found in this materialistic theory of translation – of which Henry Meschonnic has become the great practitioner<sup>2</sup> – a justification for the choices I made. From the very beginning I had the impression that rather than merely translating a text, I was *translating a culture*, or to be more precise, a culture-within-a-culture, since the text that I worked from dated from seventeenth-century England, a historical period far removed from today's audience, and deserving of interpretation in itself. Curiously, the great difficulty I had in translating *The Tempest* was caused by this great cultural barrier. It was caused by the fact that I was working with a linguistic system with substantially different rules to Portuguese and, moreover, from a historically distant period. This difficulty was not confined to problems of translating the words of a particular passage of Shakespeare into Portuguese; it involved an even more difficult aspect, pervading the entire play: the presentation of Prospero's spirit Ariel.

As the agent of Prospero, Ariel is an important character, behind a multiplicity of plots. It is Ariel who unleashes and controls the storm, who separates the castaways into groups and constantly controls their

<sup>2</sup> See Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la Poétique II. Épistémologie de l'Écriture – Poétique de la Traduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

actions. It is Ariel who convinces Ferdinand that his father has died and who leads him to Miranda. It is also Ariel who alerts Alonso to the conspiracy of which he is about to be the target, who deceives the nobles accompanying the king, and who physically punishes Caliban and his companions. In the end, it is Ariel who blesses the union of Miranda and Ferdinand, and encourages Prospero to take pity on the castaways.

In truth, Ariel has constant stage presence in *The Tempest*. This constancy however, is partly due to the physical changes which Ariel undergoes throughout the play. Invisible to the castaways (except Prospero, who observes him), Ariel is transformed into a sea nymph, materialises in the very music that captivates Ferdinand and awakens Gonzalo, takes on the shocking appearance of a harpy that devours the banquet offered to the nobles, most probably carries out the role of Ceres in the masque scene, and teases the dogs chasing Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano. The vague stage directions given by Shakespeare – Ariel is merely described in the list of roles as “an airy spirit” – has challenged the imagination of generations of playwrights to cast Ariel in the most diverse physical appearances.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ariel was mainly presented as a feminine character, although the interpretation of “her” nature varied considerably. Indeed, it is enough to remember the way in which Ann Field appeared at the Drury Lane theatre in 1778, representing Ariel as a dragon-fly; or even Julia St George, in 1847, assuming the physical appearance of a very feminine angel. The image of Ariel as a combination of angel, insect, and fairy, as popularised by Priscilla Reed Horton in the nineteenth century, ought not to be forgotten either. In the twentieth century, playwrights of *The Tempest* explored Ariel’s strength of character to even greater depths. In 1934, for example, we saw Elsa Lanchester casting an Ariel who appeared to have emerged from a children’s story, very close to Tinkerbell, Peter Pan’s companion. 1940 saw a masculine representation of Ariel by Marius Goring. In fact, Goring’s male appearance on stage resembled a bird (probably inspired by the speech in Act 5

where Prospero calls his spirit "My Ariel, chick" (5.1.317). In recent years masculine representations of Ariel have predominated. In 1970, for example, Ben Kingsley played an Ariel free from constraints, half naked, almost blending in with nature. Then in 1993, Simon Russell Beale played a decidedly masculine Ariel in a suit. And the black actor Gilz Terera, in the 2001 production of the Royal Shakespeare Company, played a somewhat caricatured version of the character bordering on the effeminate.<sup>3</sup>

Since Ariel serves Prospero, different representations of this character imply different relations of power. Portrayals of Ariel as a dragon-fly or bird could be taken as a mark of the omnipotence of Prospero. Casting Ariel as an angel may represent a comparison of Prospero's power with that of God. Sexual tensions are clearly awakened with the presentation on stage of an Ariel-Tinkerbell, forever in love with Prospero-Peter Pan, also comparing the power of Prospero with that of fantasy and imagination. A masculine representation of Ariel raises further questions, which have been explored by postcolonialist critics. More recently, critics have also tried to detect homosexual tensions in the Prospero-Ariel relationship.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See *The Tempest*, edited by Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 34-48; Maria Helena Serôdio, *William Shakespeare: A Sedução dos Sentidos* (Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 1996), 260-61; *The Tempest*, edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 28 and 112-18; and *The Tempest*, edited by Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 64-87.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of *The Tempest* in a post-colonial context, see Andrew Gurr, "Industrious and Idle Caliban," in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 193-94; David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 184-90; Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47-54; Jerry Brotton, "This Tunis, Sir, Was Carthage: Contesting Colonialism in the *The Tempest*," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, edited by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1999), 26-29; and Wole Soyinka, "Shakespeare and the Living Dramatist," in *Shakespeare and Race*, edited by Catherine M. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 88. On gender issues and sexual tensions in *The Tempest* see Dymkowski, *The Tempest*, 134-48; and Orgel, *The Tempest*, 112-24.

But what do all these questions have to do with my translation of *The Tempest*? In truth, these are problems which in relation to the English text only crop up when the text is brought to life on stage, depending on the interpretation and message that each playwright decides to offer his audience. However, it is a different matter in Portuguese and when I mention these questions here it is because the *conditioned interpretation* which I mentioned above and which I adopted as a translation guide, forced me to press upon the Portuguese version of *The Tempest* a whole range of interpretations and meanings.

One of the grammatical nuances that distinguishes Portuguese from English is rooted in the subject-verb agreement with respect to gender, an agreement which does not exist in English. For example, in the question, in English, “Where are you sitting?”, if we did not have prior information about the interlocutor of the statement’s subject, it would be impossible for us to determine his/her gender from this statement alone. Yet, in Portuguese this information is given by the agreement of the verb with the subject, even when this is merely implied. Thus the same question in Portuguese – “Onde estás sentado?” – implies a masculine interlocutor, whereas “Onde estás sentada?” implies a female interlocutor.

My translation of *The Tempest*, particularly with regard to the passages in which Ariel appears, was naturally conditioned by the fact that I was working with linguistic systems with different rules. I was forced from the very beginning to carry out the function which the English text leaves to the playwright, and to determine the gender of Ariel. Since this work did not mean to be a reflection on the way in which spirits were represented in the Renaissance, I limited myself to referring to the definition offered by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*:

For spirits when they please  
Can either Sex assume, or both.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by John Broadbent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), I, 423.

The idea in Milton is that of the indetermined gender of spirits: they are genderless, but they may assume one gender – or both! – when they materialise and become visible to the human eye. And this, essentially, is the case with Ariel: he does not have a gender, he assumes different forms in different situations; and we should note that the variety of these materialisations is not without importance, producing multiple meanings in the process.

Although, while translating a culture-within-a-culture, I had decided that Ariel's gender was indeterminable, I was still working towards a Portuguese linguistic system which implies subject-verb agreement with regard to gender. This forced me to take an important decision. The question centred on choosing between a female Ariel – which would appear an adequate representation of Ariel as a sea nymph or harpy (nouns which are feminine in Portuguese) – and a male Ariel – which would be possible because in Portuguese “spirit” is a masculine noun, and also because of the sole appearance of a masculine possessive pronoun in the English original:

... to thy strong bidding task  
Ariel and all *his* quality.

(*The Tempest*, 1.2.192-93)

Having considered these two options, I felt that the arguments in favour of the latter were the stronger. In my translation of *The Tempest*, therefore, Portuguese readers will find a masculine Ariel. However, I must confess that I was not totally satisfied with this choice, since it *does* alter Shakespeare's text significantly. In truth, describing a sea nymph by a masculine noun seems odd to Portuguese readers, since it almost gives the character the appearance of a transvestite. But presenting a feminine Ariel did not feel like an adequate solution either.

When I began translating *The Tempest*, I was already aware that any translation involves, above all, an act of interpretation, and that every translator inevitably adds his or her own reading to the original text. I

reached the conclusion that the traumatic tradition of translation that Bellei describes is more accurate than it might seem, and to this very day, I fear that in translating *The Tempest* I may have superimposed onto Shakespeare's text a message that the author himself would not have accepted in his time. Nevertheless, I feel that the trauma defined by Bellei should not prevent us from translating. Like everything else in life, we have to learn to live with our fears. Looking back, I feel satisfied for having concluded the task of translating *The Tempest*, for in doing so I have given a voice to one of Shakespeare's greatest play texts – a Portuguese voice, it is true, but even so a voice which will go some way towards guiding the Portuguese reader on a journey through the captivating world of the poet from Stratford.



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# Gipsy Queens

## Portuguese Cleopatras and the Fascination of Opprobrium

Rui Carvalho Homem

A conspicuous aspect of the reception of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in recent decades is its sheer growth. The increased interest in this tragedy is an adequate gauge of prevalent critical mores: the post-structuralist and post-modernist cherishing of procedures that will highlight diversity or dispersion rather than a delusively all-controlling unity, and that may put in evidence a challenging and ostensible dis-order over formal neatness, has turned the relative unwieldiness of *Antony and Cleopatra's* many scenes, once a liability ("very defective in construction," Bradley *dixit*), into one of its major assets.<sup>1</sup> The combination of such formal qualities with the verbal vitality invested in the construction of especially its central female character has even enabled critics to detect in the play "a form of modernist fragmentation," combined with the "stream of consciousness" techniques that supposedly buttress Cleopatra's "linguistic and sexual power"<sup>2</sup> – a heroine construed, in short, in very much avant-la-lettre Molly Bloomian terms. Reviewing the received opinion on *Antony and Cleopatra*, John Drakakis remarks on how some earlier appraisals of the play, which he reads as precursory of more recent crit-

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 283.

<sup>2</sup> See the editor's introduction to *Antony and Cleopatra: Contemporary Critical Essays*, edited by John Drakakis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 4.

icism, evince what he sees as “a clear perception of a process of deconstruction *avant la lettre* which is going on in the play” (Drakakis, 9).

The formal features that enable the renewal of this tragedy’s critical favour can further be construed as a structural correspondence of “the variety of viewpoints and judgements presented [in *Antony and Cleopatra*], the refusal of a single historical or ethical centre,” as well as a sign of this play’s vindication of difference.<sup>3</sup> And central to that vindication is the character of Cleopatra – to be rescued from those previous readings which would bring to it either an ethically motivated denigration, or a fascination now deemed to spring from culturally and politically less than admirable sources. Instances of the former memorably ranged from Dr. Johnson’s reference to Cleopatra’s “too low [...] feminine arts” to Coleridge’s musings on “the sense of criminality in her passion,” a passion which “springs out of the habitual craving of a licentious nature”; and further included George Bernard Shaw’s dismissal of the play as “a faithful picture of the soldier broken down by debauchery, & the typical wanton in whose arms such men perish.”<sup>4</sup> As for the latter, fascination for the character was made evident by the zest with which nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century critics raved on about the character’s manifold and exotic charms. Some spoke of “the luxurious pomp and gorgeous extravagance of the Egyptian queen displayed in all their force and lustre” (Bate, 265-66). Others spoke of the queen as “one brilliant impersonation of classical elegance, Oriental voluptuousness, and gipsy sorcery” (Russell Brown, 35-36). To some, Cleopatra is “the Orient [...] the voluptuousness of the East [...] the most wonderful of Shakespeare’s women. And not of Shakespeare’s women only, but perhaps the most wonderful of women”

<sup>3</sup> Margot Heinemann, “‘Let Rome in Tiber Melt’: Order and Disorder in *Antony and Cleopatra*,” in *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by Drakakis, 177.

<sup>4</sup> See resp. *Antony and Cleopatra: A Casebook*, edited by John Russell Brown, rev. edn. (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991), 26; *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, edited by Jonathan Bate (London: Penguin, 1992), 263-64; and *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by Michael Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69-70.

(Russell Brown, 45). Alternatively, she was “a gipsy, a child, a fury and a great and noble queen in her immortal longings” (Russell Brown, 56) – thus (respectively) William Hazlitt (1817), Anna Jameson (1833), Georg Brandes (1896), Arthur Symons (quoted by Brandes), and a reviewer (signing E. F.) of a 1953 production, starring Peggy Ashcroft.

Noticeable in all of these statements is how thin the borderline is between the fascination they manifest, and a near-unwilling design of opprobrium, made all the more noticeable when enumeration brings critical discourse close to a vituperative dynamic. In 1817, Hazlitt observed that Cleopatra was “voluptuous, ostentatious, conscious, boastful of her charms, haughty, tyrannical [and] fickle” (Bate, 265). Or, as Edward Dowden stated:

At every moment we are necessarily aware of the gross, the mean, the disorderly womanhood in Cleopatra, no less than of the witchery and wonder which excite, and charm, and subdue. We see her a dissembler, a termagant, a coward; [...] quick, shifting, multitudinous, incalculable...

(Russel Brown, 41-42)

Several elements of this discourse on Cleopatra make it predictable that the forms taken on by critical fascination for Shakespeare’s character would, in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century critical climate, have to be denounced as both sexist and racist. Critical celebration (rather than denunciation) of Cleopatra’s cultural status as *femme fatale* is today as exceptional as Camille Paglia’s predominantly psychoanalytical study of a whole gallery of *Sexual Personae* in which Cleopatra takes pride of place<sup>5</sup> – her “vilification” taken by Paglia as an inevitability and a sign of empowerment, rather than as the source of a sense of grievance and of its appertaining rescue operation. Otherwise, the way critical discourse has in the past

<sup>5</sup> Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990), 212-29.

seemed so eager to take at face value the dark side of that “voluptuousness” and “witchery” with which in Shakespeare’s text the character is regularly branded by the discourse from Rome, and the way it departs from such acceptance to the identification of those qualities with an essential womanhood, is apt to be denounced as a strategy for othering (and ultimately demeaning) the figure of the assertive woman – whose assertiveness, it has occasionally been argued, should earn this tragedy the title (simply) *Cleopatra*.<sup>6</sup>

The alterity of the overpowering (and hence “disorderly”) woman is compounded by her “Oriental” quality, by the way Cleopatra has always been a prominent element in that “prodigious cultural repertoire” of the Orient which, as Edward Said famously demonstrated, so extensively “nourished” the European imagination.<sup>7</sup> The present-day spectator or reader of *Antony and Cleopatra* cannot but be reminded of this when Cleopatra is apostrophised as “eastern star” (5.2.302), or when Antony declares that “I’th’East my pleasure lies” (2.3.40) and that “The beds i’th’East are soft” (2.6.50).<sup>8</sup> Besides, some of the supposed qualities which Said identified as defining the otherness of the Oriental for the European mind are recognisable among those traits which criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra* has long detected and made commonplace in appraisals of the play’s female protagonist – her refusal of objectivity, her assumption of the traits of a trickster and impostor, and the way she comes to embody a lust which becomes a source of male fantasies as much as of fear and revulsion. Cleopatra’s sexuality, and the fascination and disgust which it elicits, can thus be argued to exist in a close and mutually enhancing rela-

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Linda Fitz, “Egyptian Queens and Male Reviewers: Sexist Attitudes in *Antony and Cleopatra* Criticism,” in *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by John Drakakis, 195.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, [1978] 1995), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> All quotations from *Antony and Cleopatra* refer to David Bevington’s edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); quotations from other Shakespeare plays refer to *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

tionship with her racial difference, as joint factors of her otherness.<sup>9</sup>

The increased interest in the play, and the critical polemics which have accompanied it, have as yet found a limited consequence in Portugal; in fact, the allusion in my title to "Portuguese Cleopatras" summons a rather elusive referent, since *Antony and Cleopatra* has had no more than three translations into Portuguese, and no records of Portuguese productions of the play have hitherto been traced by research. The pronounced differences between European and Brazilian Portuguese, and the diverse challenges they pose in terms of translation analysis, entail that Brazilian translations will be beyond the scope of this article.<sup>10</sup> Since this article was largely prompted by the experience of doing a new translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and by the research which that entailed, it will be dealing both with aspects of the three previous translations and (explicitly or implicitly) with my own reading and translation of the play. I should add at this point that I have always understood my reading to be inseparable from my Portuguese background, even when the circumstances of reception are not necessarily made explicit in what I consequently write. Further, I fully endorse the view, put forward by several theorists (Gadamer included), that all acts of communication are in one way or another instances of translation; this means that, at the outset, reading is already translation, whilst "translation proper" is, in this sense, a case of meta-translation.<sup>11</sup> To this brief gallery of fundamental assumptions I should also add Wolfgang Iser's reminder that in translation the specificity of "the culture encountered can be grasped only when projected onto what is familiar."<sup>12</sup> I derive from this a

<sup>9</sup> See also Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 119-41.

<sup>10</sup> Mention should be made, though, of José Roberto O'Shea's excellent translation of *Antônio e Cleópatra* (São Paulo: Mandarin, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *The Craft of Translation*, edited by John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), ix.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Iser, "On Translatability: Variables of Interpretation," in *The European English Messenger* 4:1 (Spring, 1995), 30.

sense of the inevitability of taking into account some of the conditions that may intervene in the *translatio* (or “transportation”) of *Antony and Cleopatra* into Portuguese – by which is meant as much its translation as other dimensions of a cross-cultural reading. Particular attention will be paid to how that otherness which is Egypt, as well as its queen (whose royalty indeed identifies her with her territory, making “Egypt” the name by which she will often be addressed or evoked in the course of the play), can be re-located in a Portuguese context; and how that process accommodates the blend of fascination and aversion which has historically been so prominent in readings of Cleopatra – obsessed as they have been with her double guise as “absolute queen” (3.6.11) and “right gipsy” (4.12.28).

This duality is presented but also unbalanced before the audience right from the opening scene, when the lovers’ first appearance on stage, potentially a grand dramatic occasion, is defiled before it happens – heralded as it is by Philo’s characterisation of the affair with Cleopatra as a debasement of Antony, the great, Mars-like general brought by his passion for a “tawny front” to “[renege] all temper” (1.1.6) and “become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy’s lust” (1.1.8-10). Cleopatra appears before the audience already dubbed “strumpet” and “gipsy,” but the latter slur will find a semantic scope in the play which is considerably greater than what might be warranted by its mere two occurrences in the text of *Antony and Cleopatra*. I will be arguing that the pervasiveness of a sense of “gipsiness” is due to the exploration throughout the play of its pejorative implications, even when the slur goes unmentioned; I will also contend that the epithet and its implications pose cultural and linguistic challenges to the Portuguese translator which are as wide-ranging as the critical possibilities they open up.

Inevitably, one has to begin by pointing out that the use of “gipsy” in the text of *Antony and Cleopatra* derives both its justification and its clout from a belief which the word’s etymology uncovers: “gipsy” comes from “Egyptian,” a sixteenth-century derivation which (according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*) is fully established by Shake-

spere's time, following close upon the first appearance in England "about the beginning of the 16th c." of members of that "wandering race [...] then believed to have come from Egypt." Other occurrences in Shakespeare confirm how early certain conventional associations (based on observation of the socio-economy of gypsy communities) gained their place in the European representation of gipsies, like their less than dignified association with horses – as when the two pages about to sing in Act 5 of *As You Like It* propose to do so "both in a tune like two gipsies on a horse" (5.3.13-14)

One might here add that Ben Jonson's masque *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* opens precisely with "A Gipsie, leading a horse laden wth five little children" and "A second, leading another horse laden wth stolne poultrie, &c."<sup>13</sup> Jonson's masque makes it clear that by 1621, besides horse-dealing, gipsies connote a rapacious socio-economic behaviour materialised in petty theft, kidnapping, and illicit offspring. It also leaves no doubt that "gipsy" and "Egyptian" are employed as interchangeable synonyms: the first words of the first gipsy to speak are, "Roome for the fiue Princes of *Aegypt*, mounted all vpon one horse" (VII: 567). Further, Cleopatra is mentioned several times in the text as a mother figure for all Egyptians, alias gipsies:

king Ptolomaeus,  
Our great *Coryphaeus*,  
And Queene *Cleopatra*,  
The *Gipsyes* grand-matra.

(Ben Jonson, VII: 570)

Indeed, any mother of gipsies can be called a Cleopatra: the first speaker in the masque, on bringing the five children onto the stage, invites the audience to "Gaze vpon them as on the ofspringe of *Ptolomee*, begotten vpon several *Cleopatra's* in their seuerall Counties" (VII: 567).

<sup>13</sup> Ben Jonson, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), VII (1941), 566.



Occurrences of “Egypt” and “Egyptian” in Shakespeare’s drama before *Antony and Cleopatra* confirm the overlap which Jonson’s masque puts in evidence: the “Egyptian” whom Othello invokes as the giver of the fatal handkerchief is “a charmer” and a diviner, conforming with the attributes of the stereotypical gipsy woman as fortune-teller (*Othello*, 3.4.56-58). But this also reinforces the perception that the interchangeability of “gipsy” and “Egyptian” in English Renaissance texts will hardly mean that the former may ever be taken as an alternative and “neutral,” non-disparaging national designation. Its pejorative import is undeniable in that passage of *Romeo and Juliet* where Mercutio, taunting Romeo with his early love discourse, enumerates the women of famous love affairs whom Romeo might want to disparage:

Laura to his lady was a kitchen wench [...], Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots.”

(2.4.35-36)

“Gipsy” is thus, in Shakespearean usage, not a matter-of-fact designation, but rather a term of opprobrium, and it is the opprobrium that predominates and contaminates in its synonymy with “Egyptian”: every time the latter name is uttered, some of the debasing semantic load of the former is summoned and activated.

That semantic load is clear in the *OED*, in the entries and in the recorded occurrences for “gipsy,” “gipseian,” “gipsydom,” “gipsyism” and the like. It is noticeable, though, that the more demeaning implications are given as obsolete. This applies to the acceptance of “gipsy” as “a cunning rogue.” When applied to a woman, it receives the following description:

A contemptuous term for a woman, as being cunning, deceitful, fickle, or the like; a “baggage,” “hussy,” etc. In more recent use merely playful, and applied esp. to a brunette.

This entails that the pejorative import illustrated above will be

accessible to most present-day, non-specialised English-speaking audiences and readerships of *Antony and Cleopatra* largely through context, or through paratexts like programme notes, or the critical apparatus of annotated editions.

Portuguese literature has also contributed to inscribing the figure of the gipsy in the national imagination. The father-figure of Portuguese drama, Gil Vicente, had his *Farce of the Gipsy Women* played before the Portuguese court in 1521, with a text that confirms the early establishment of the already identified commonplace features: the allusion to Egypt as place of origin, fortune-reading on the part of the women, trading in lame horses on the part of the men, and the attribution of peculiarities of pronunciation that prompt the audience to recognise the stereotype, which in its broad features will find its continuity into the work of a number of other writers, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the twentieth. Some occurrences from the work of Dom Francisco Manuel de Melo (1608-66), Camilo Castelo Branco (1825-90), and Aquilino Ribeiro (1885-1963) are recorded by António Morais da Silva in his *Grande Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, which helps confirm that “cigano” and “cigana” (the Portuguese words for “gipsy”) carry similar connotations to those described above for “gipsy,” and that they do so with a vengeance. Indeed, around ten different definitions are given for the noun “cigano,” only the first of which (“indivíduo pertencente à raça dos ciganos” [an individual belonging to the gipsy race]) serves an intent of “neutral” description, since the other, blatantly disparaging definitions include “a rogue,” “a con man,” “one who deals in horses, but always in bad faith,” and “one who asks for a high price for a certain commodity, but eventually sells it for a much lower price.” No indication is given that these are obsolete usages, and all the other derivations recorded, with their corresponding entries – like “ciganada,” “ciganagem,” “ciganar,” “ciganaria,” and “ciganice” – partake of a derogatory drift whose persistence most Portuguese speakers and listeners can easily verify in daily usage.

The sociological reasons for this should be clear to those with any knowledge of Portuguese society: gipsy communities remain a significant presence in the Portuguese social landscape, not just in the old, more obviously nomadic forms – of camps, with carts and horses, donkeys or mules gradually replaced by old cars and vans – but also, in the urban areas, as socially half-integrated families to be found trading at traditional fairs and markets regularly held in different parts of the country. Sadly, recent years have seen an updating of the gipsies' reputation for petty criminality by the association of some communities with drug traffic, leading to manifestations of xenophobia that have regularly made it to the headlines and to political debate, at both local and national level.

These are data of which, however remote from the literary they may seem at first sight, the translator will have to be aware since they introduce an element of obvious difference in the Portuguese reception of Cleopatra's "gipsiness." But that difference is also of a lexical nature, and here the issue of origins, ethnic and lexical, becomes relevant once more. The identification of "gipsies" with "Egyptians" that we saw was common both in English and Portuguese sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama, will hardly be perceived today, except by the etymologically learned. However, the wordplay throughout *Antony and Cleopatra* around the two designations will still be accessible to audiences in English: the derivation by apheresis (from "Egyptian" to "Gyptian," and thence to "Gipsy," as the *OED* makes clear) ensured a morphologic closeness which will allow the relation between the two words to be at least perceived as punning, even if no longer as synonymy. No such effect, however, is possible in Portuguese, since derivation produced morphologically distanced words ("Egípcio" and "cigano/cigana") that will not evoke or echo each other throughout the text.

This introduces a complication in some of the translator's choices, which we may consider by returning at this point to Philo's initial apostrophising of Cleopatra as "gipsy" – a "lust[ful]" gipsy. As mentioned above, Philo's words take on the dramatic value of an

introduction, of a derogatory stage-direction for Cleopatra's entrance. If we are to assume an economy of dramatic information which in turn assumes an audience without a clue as to the historical basis for the female character about to enter, Philo's words would, by virtue of the gypsy/Egyptian nexus, be the first and crucial indication to an English-speaking audience that the character in question is indeed the queen of Egypt, whom Philo is deriding – a derision, however, already ensured by other elements in Philo's speech. In view of all this, though, and of the awareness that the gypsy/Egyptian nexus does not work in Portuguese, the translator may find it justifiable to hesitate, when translating "gypsy," between "cigana," which preserves the slur specifically in this lexical choice, or "egípcia," which retains that initial identification of the character's origin otherwise lost on the audience. In my version, I opted for the latter, since disparagement of Cleopatra is, after all, ensured by the rest of Philo's speech, and, in my view, a prompt identification of the character depends crucially on translating "gypsy" in such a way as to acknowledge her belonging to Egypt; moreover, the feature which Philo is ascribing to Cleopatra as a slur (her lust) does not perforce require the "gypsy" reference, being a more general trait in representations of the Oriental woman, whose features of magnificent exoticism are not easily associated by a Portuguese audience with a "gipsiness" which is culturally familiar, an everyday presence on the social scene.

On sacrificing Cleopatra's "gipsiness" in this opening speech, so as to secure her "Egyptianness," I chose to diverge from the three previous Portuguese translators – Henrique Braga (1914), Laura Figueiredo (1963-4), and Nuno Valadas (1970) – who unanimously opted for "cigana." There is no divergence, however, when it comes to translating the second occurrence of the word, in 4.12.28. Antony has just lost his final, definitive battle, and blames Cleopatra for it with some of the most serious verbal violence in the play: within twenty lines she is a "foul Egyptian," a "triple-turned whore," a "false soul of Egypt," a "grave charm" (i.e. a fatal witch), and a "right gypsy"

(4.12.10-28). Until the latter epithet, the negative qualities ascribed to Cleopatra in this stream of opprobrium can be associated with gipsiness – but, again, not necessarily or exclusively. The context in which “gipsy” occurs this time, though, gives the reference a more specific content; the passage reads: “Like a right gipsy [she] hath at fast and loose / Beguiled me to the very heart of loss” (4.12.28-29). The falsehood and trickery which previous lines imputed to her in rather grandiose terms here gains a lowly, almost streetwise feature, because of the allusion to a game which the *OED* specifically associates with gypsies, a game by which the victim would be led to believe in the “fastness” of a knot only to be shown how “loose” it was, and thus cheated of his/her bet. The relevance of the image is obvious for an Antony whose emotional, sexual and political bonds to Cleopatra appear to him false knots indeed, and it combines the lowliness of the cheating game with the emotional poignancy and totality of “the very heart of loss.” What I mean to underline, though, is the necessity of the “gipsy” reference in this case, with its correspondent rendering as “cigana” – since the occurrences of both “Egyptian” and “gipsy” in the same speech necessitate a lexical distinction, also required by the specificity of the image. It is arguable that the two occurrences of “gipsy” in *Antony and Cleopatra* thus offer themselves up as a test case for disproving the expectation that a lexical recurrence should inevitably be transposed as such onto the target text.

As already suggested above, though, Cleopatra’s gipsiness cannot be taken as restricted to the verbal and conceptual play on “gipsy” *vs* “Egyptian.” Its construction throughout the text of *Antony and Cleopatra* often depends on an unsignalled presence of the gipsy stereotype, which should be duly acknowledged by the Portuguese translator as having a bearing on his/her decisions. That half-playfulness and those *doubles entendres* which in the second scene of the play, largely with a view to characterising Cleopatra’s entourage, surround and follow the request that the soothsayer tell everybody’s fortune (specifically) by palm-reading, owe a lot to a juxtaposition of the ancient and exotic (the remote arts of an Egyptian diviner) with

the familiar and lowly artfulness ascribed to gipsies. For a Portuguese audience the latter reference can be very effectively signalled by simply employing the popular phrase “*ler a sina*,” traditionally associated with the palm reading performed by gipsy women, for the “fortune-telling” requested of the soothsayer.<sup>14</sup>

This is, however, no more than an incidental moment in the construction of Cleopatra’s gipsiness. Much broader in scope, and recurrent throughout the text, is the employment of animal imagery, often, but not exclusively, serving the disparagement of Cleopatra. Such imagery will *not* include, obviously, that reptilian nexus of serpent and crocodile whose symbolic and heraldic implications, together with its confirmation in the manner of her death, have often received critical attention and are important verbal factors of Cleopatra’s fascination. The passages I will rather be concerned with are those in which animal representation is blatantly on the side of opprobrium, and even more particularly those in which the animal quality imputed connotes lust and sexual promiscuity, or whoredom.

An instance of this occurs when Antony finds Cleopatra with Caesar’s envoy, Thidias, in what he takes to be both political and sexual betrayal. The dialogue that follows will include the bitterest recrimination, but before that, when Antony is calling out for servants that will take Thidias away to be whipped, he blurts out to Cleopatra, parenthetically: “Ah, you kite!” (3.13.91). As the *OED*, Onions’s *Glossary*, and every modern critical edition make clear, the predatory import of “kite” finds here a specifically sexual acceptance that makes the word a synonym of “whore.” Previous Portuguese translators mistook or eluded the issue: Nuno Valadas rightly understood that the utterance is directed at Cleopatra, but he rendered the ordinary, surface, meaning as “*Maldito milhafre!*” You

<sup>14</sup> I was reminded of the convenience of such a rendering at a very early stage by Manuel Gomes da Torre, as director of the Shakespeare Translation and Research Project, University of Oporto. Previous Portuguese translators of *Antony and Cleopatra* have also resorted to it.

damned hawk!<sup>15</sup> – an option whose alliteration has the virtue of attending to the rhetoric of abuse. As for Henrique Braga and Laura Figueiredo, they also translated “kite” by its bird-of-prey meaning, but they both took the exclamation as directed at the servants (a reading which the Folio does not allow, since the addressee is singular): “*aves de rapina*” (“birds of prey”), “*corja de abutres*” (“band of vultures”).<sup>16</sup> In my case, not being able to retain both the rapacious and the promiscuous, whorish sense, I judged the latter to be more relevant, both semantically and in terms of dramatic rhetoric, and rendered the exclamation as “*Ab, cabral!*” – the Portuguese word for “she-goat,” whose import as a term of opprobrium is close to that conveyed in English by “bitch” (the resulting utterance having, in my view, the advantage of an expletive concision, realised through the same consonant as in the original).

With a clearer relevance to the construction of Cleopatra’s gipsiness, however, is the imagery of yet another derogatory passage, this time not in Antony’s but rather in Scarus’s mouth, famously describing Cleopatra’s fatally disgraceful escape from Actium. Scarus refers to Cleopatra as “Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt” (3.10.10). The qualifier “ribaudred” has caused much doubt as to its exact form and grammatical status, and consequently much glossing, though it has been retained with the original, rather puzzling Folio spelling by most modern editors, including Emrys Jones (New Penguin Shakespeare), David Bevington (New Cambridge Shakespeare), and John Wilders (Arden 3). A consensus also exists as to its general implication of “ribaldry,” be that a quality of the “nag” itself, or of those who ride it. But it is precisely the equine image of the nag and – again, as with “kite” – its underlying meaning of “whore” that I would like to focus on. Above we saw, how the place held by gypsies in the European imagination was inseparable from their horse-trading activities, and

<sup>15</sup> *António e Cleópatra*, translated by Nuno Valadas (Lisboa: Presença, 1970), 162.

<sup>16</sup> *António e Cleópatra*, translated by Henrique Braga (Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1914), 185; and *António e Cleópatra*, translated by Laura Costa Dias de Figueiredo, in *Obras De Shakespeare*, edited by Luís de Sousa Rebelo (n.p.: José Scarpa, 1963-64), II, 393.

how passages both in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and in Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd* associate gypsies with horses that have more than one rider. It is my contention that the "ribaudred nag of Egypt" passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as well as the frequency with which equine imagery occurs in connection with Cleopatra's deeds, misdeeds and desires, should productively be read as a reminder of her gipsiness. One should remember that, in the opening dialogue of Act 3, scene 7, Cleopatra takes Enobarbus to task for criticising her determination to take part in the wars against Caesar, and he comments: "If we should serve with horse and mares together, / The horse were merely lost; the mares would bear / A soldier and his horse" (3.7.7-9) – a risible aside which chooses to represent and indict female participation in war as bringing about a sexual diversion, and in turn couches the foreseeable covering of mares by stallions in the grotesque image of a mount with more than one rider, one equine, the other human. Earlier in the play, Cleopatra had voiced her longing for an absent Antony by imagining him on horseback, and promptly couching that longing as jealousy of the mount: "O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!" (1.5.22); once more, sexual love and horse-riding are imaginatively conflated, and the image also associates the beast and the loose woman, this time through the homophonic pun on "horse" / whores.<sup>17</sup>

In my view, Portuguese translations have hardly found their chief strength when dealing with this dimension of the text of *Antony and Cleopatra*. That is best seen in the "yon ribaudred nag of Egypt" passage, in which both Braga and Figueiredo render "nag" as "*ju-menta*" (the female form of a Portuguese word for a donkey), suggestive in Portuguese of stupidity rather than lust; whereas Valadas completely discards the animal image and renders "nag" as "*prostituta*." Since the use of an adjective (which may render "ribaudred")

<sup>17</sup> For a critical consideration of whoredom in *Antony and Cleopatra*, see Theodora A. Jankowski, *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 147-49 and 161-62.



allows the retention of a sense of sexual depravation, and the noun chosen can retain the equine sense, I opted for rendering the passage as “*Essa égua debochada / Do Egipto*” (That debauched mare of Egypt) – also in the belief that “*égua*” (Portuguese for “mare”) will more aptly correspond in the target language to a conventional association of female equinity with lust.

Significantly or not, the perplexities experienced by previous translators in rendering Cleopatra’s lust often produce passages which seem to counter the dominant tone of their texts. Thus, the usually more elaborate, less colloquial, and philologically more aware Laura Figueiredo echoes Henrique Braga when she overtranslates (on the side of revilement) Agrippa’s delighted exclamation, “Royal wench!” (2.2.236), as “*Real cortesã!*” (Royal courtesan!).<sup>18</sup> Conversely, the more fluent and colloquial text of Nuno Valadas, closer in general to the idioms of late twentieth-century speech, may stumble upon a squeamish metonymy when he renders that “lap of Egypt’s widow” (from which Pompey doubts his rebellion would “pluck / The ne’er-lust-wearied Antony,” 2.1.38-39) as “[*os joelhos da viúva egípcia*]” (the Egyptian widow’s knees, 87). One might add that Cleopatra’s “lap” seems to have been disturbing enough for Figueiredo to have sublimated and generalised it as “[*os braços da viúva do Egipto*]” (the arms of Egypt’s widow, 323); and for Braga to have metonymised it as “[*as saias da viúva egípcia*]” (the skirts of the Egyptian widow, 52) – immediately compensating this relative prudishness by overtranslating “The ne’er-lust-wearied Antony” as “*o incansável garanhão Antonio*” (Antony, that indefatigable stud, 52): the return of the equine, with a vengeance. The same Henrique Braga is also carried away by Cleopatra’s lustful arts when he renders the passage, “She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed” (2.2.237) as “*Tanto fez que conseguiu que o grande César lhe metesse a espada na carne*” (She went to such trouble, that she got great Caesar to stick his sword in her flesh, 73).

<sup>18</sup> *António e Cleópatra*, translated by Braga, 73; *António e Cleópatra*, translated by Figueiredo, 333.

My purpose on citing these particularities within the limited tradition of translating *Antony and Cleopatra* into Portuguese is – rather than nourishing the intellectual complacency of the literary anecdote – to help demonstrate how persistent the presence of the play's female protagonist proves to be in the European imagination. As I hope to have shown above, the growing critical interest in this play is, in one form or another, indissociable from the celebration or the critique of Cleopatra read as a persona whose cultural and dramatic vitality rests on a complex staging of her sexuality. Such foregrounding of the sexual in turn seeks its imaginative clout in a complex evocation of both an Egyptian magnificence and a lowly gipsiness – or (if I am allowed to get away with both a pleonasm and an oxymoron) an exotic remoteness and an exotic familiarity. The pages above will have suggested some of the particular challenges which this poses to the Portuguese translator, as well as the way in which a confrontation of such challenges often inevitably confirm the recurrence and the close imbrication, in the construction of Cleopatra, of what I have chosen to call fascination and opprobrium.

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# Shakespeare in the Bay of Portugal

## A Tribute to Luis Cardim (1879-1958)<sup>1</sup>

João Almeida Flor

Considering that close diplomatic, commercial, and military links had existed between England and Portugal ever since the twelfth century, the fact that Shakespeare's references to life and culture in Portugal are few and far between cannot fail to surprise historically-minded readers. In all probability, this can be explained by the poet's awareness that during his literary career and lifetime Spain and Portugal were regarded as one country, politically ruled by the dual monarchy of the Habsburgs until 1640.

Nevertheless, if you turn your attention to the type and nature of allusions in various passages of the canon, it will become apparent that Shakespeare's information about Portugal amounts to a general identification of vintage wines, national currency, and maritime enterprise. The name of the country itself is referred to only once when Rosalind in *As You Like It* compares the depth of her love for Orlando to the unfathomable sea, stretching south from Oporto to the Lisbon area and says: "My affection hath an unknown bottom, like the Bay of Portugal."<sup>2</sup> The single instance of this placename in

<sup>1</sup> This paper is gratefully dedicated to Manuel Gomes da Torre as a token of friendship and respect.

<sup>2</sup> *As You Like It*, edited by Agnes Latham, in *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works*, edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), 4.1.195. Further Shakespearean references will be to this edition of the *Complete Works*.

Shakespeare thus evokes the ocean and the technicalities of nautical charts easily recognised by Elizabethan seamen and buccaneers who raided a number of Peninsular ports in the late sixteenth century.

In a sad way, Shakespeare's comparative negligence toward this country seems to have been reciprocated for a hundred and fifty years after his death. In fact, the first mention of his name in Portuguese texts can be found as late as the mid-eighteenth century and the tradition of Shakespearean criticism and translation in this country was largely a tardy by-product of the Romantic age.

The considerable number of intertextual references to Shakespearean characters, themes, or works to be found in nineteenth-century Portuguese poets, novelists, and playwrights does not substantiate a direct, first-hand knowledge of the plays. It simply bears witness to the wide currency and popularity of such literary stereotypes and stock allusions in European culture.

Only the early twentieth century in Portugal can be credited with the successful attempt to place Shakespeare in the context of the literary canon as essential reading for university students of modern humanities. In addition, it became clear at the time that the growth of Shakespearean studies everywhere had reached a point where it did represent a well-defined area of teaching where aspiring scholars could undertake serious research. Additionally, from a practical point of view, academics also realized that a well-informed critical stance would presumably throw light upon the major issues at stake in the theatrical productions of Shakespeare's repertoire among us.

In the group of early-twentieth-century Portuguese intellectuals who favoured the co-operation between specialist knowledge and stage expertise, the name and figure of Luis Cardim (1879-1958) should be singled out. His professional achievement as a scholar, literary translator and Professor of English had a lasting influence upon the reception of Shakespeare in Portugal. While Manuel Gomes da Torre's biographical essay on Luis Cardim (1987) will remain the basic, authoritative tool of research, the present essay proposes to expand upon the subject and evaluate the author's contribution to Por-

tuguese Shakespeareana in the light of the atmosphere that surrounded the first, short-lived Faculty of Letters (1919-1931) of the University of Oporto.<sup>3</sup> A general survey of early Portuguese response to Shakespeare's reputation will provide an adequate introduction.

When Shakespeare was first brought to the notice of Portuguese readers in the mid-eighteenth century, the strictures of French neo-classical taste weighed heavily on critical opinion that disapproved of dramatists who disregarded pseudo-Aristotelian unities and other formal restrictions imposed by contemporary normative poetics.

Consequently, the basic tenets of rational philosophy that lay at the heart of the aesthetic Enlightenment fully justified various sorts of literary intervention in Shakespeare's text, to make it fit into the conventional moulds of the French stage. To make matters worse, the emerging sensibility of what was to be termed Romanticism and the development of new aesthetic categories such as the picturesque, the sublime, and the image of the poet as a godlike genius came too late to prevent gross misunderstanding of Shakespeare at that time. Even liberal-minded Portuguese intellectuals who had travelled widely abroad and kept up with recent turns in European culture, would complain about the Gothic, uncouth, barbarian-like features of Shakespeare's craftsmanship, in that it broke the principle of decorum by mixing disparate elements in a series of intermingling plots, sub-plots and under-plots.

Such objections prevailed well into the 1830s and naturally paved the way for all sorts of improvements on Shakespearean drama. The Portuguese adoption of Ducis' rewritings is an unmistakable sign of the way in which the dramatist's own art was found to be faulty, unrefined, and unfit for public performance.

It should be emphasised that the conspicuous supremacy of the French language and culture in Portuguese society during the nine

<sup>3</sup> M. Gomes da Torre, "Dr. Luis Cardim: dos liceus para a antiga Faculdade de Letras do Porto," *Separata da Revista da Faculdade de Letras do Porto – Línguas e Literaturas*, second series, vol. IV (1987).

teenth century had the effect of screening the original text which was often mediated by indirect translations or even by opera libretti sung by foreign touring companies. A few Portuguese writers (Rebello da Silva, Castilho, Bulhão Pato, and others) did try their hand at providing acceptable translations. But final results were rather modest, either because translators failed to understand Shakespeare's densely metaphoric discourse or because they yielded to the pressure of social conventions by smoothing over and levelling out (and bowdlerising, if need be) the surface of Shakespeare's language.

Over the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, a number of historical circumstances contributed to bring about a gradual change in this state of affairs. On the one hand, Romantic critical theory had established, once and for all, the inviolable character of a poet's text, and editors and translators alike now strove to maintain or reconstruct authorial intention as displayed by a critical consideration of words themselves. This desideratum was, of course, reinforced by the fact that theorists insisted on proclaiming fidelity to the original or source text as the sole yardstick used to assess the quality of translated literature. On the other hand, late-nineteenth-century philological scholarship and textual criticism had highlighted the paramount importance of establishing a reliable text and every care was taken to disallow all signs of spurious hand from the final version. Thus, both poetic and scholarly arguments coincided in devaluating adapted or imitated versions and in challenging the legitimacy of interpolations.

The practical effects of this change of paradigm upon the development of Shakespearean translation in Portugal soon became apparent, and praise was duly reserved to mark the accurate rendering of unabridged texts. In fact, one of the translators of *Othello* (1875) was no less than King Luis I of Portugal, and one of the reasons why his achievement enjoyed some critical acclaim was precisely because the royal version gave few signs of shunning Shakespeare's bawdy language, sexual innuendoes, and indecent puns.

Incidentally, it should be remarked that general respect for the in-

tegrity of the text and resistance to bowdlerised versions were among the main assets of the only complete Portuguese translation of Shakespeare's canon to date. This venture was taken up by Oporto publishers Lello & Irmão in 1905 and successfully carried on for the next few decades.

A closer evaluation of the ebb and flow of Shakespeare's fortune in Portugal will emphasise Luis Cardim's political and cultural activity and his involvement in the early-twentieth-century Oporto-based movement towards the Portuguese Revival (*Renascença Portuguesa*), that played an important role in shaping the Modernist frame of mind.

Even a cursory consideration of the period in Portugal from 1890 to 1910 will show the signs of a sense of decay and imminent catastrophe that set in shortly after the British Ultimatum (1890). This put an abrupt end to the Portuguese colonial dream of controlling the vast African territories that linked Angola to Mozambique. In a way, the feeble attitude of the Portuguese cabinet and of the king himself triggered a wave of nationalist opposition and widespread Anglophobia that were instrumental in discrediting the monarchy and preparing the establishment of a republican regime (1910).

At first, the Republic seemed to fulfil the expectations of all messianic dreams of phoenix-like national regeneration, which accounts for the high frequency of words and concepts like *reconstruction*, *reform*, *renaissance*, *renewal* and *reorganisation* in contemporary political discourse. But it was not long before the cultural elite expressed growing disappointment with the new regime that had stopped short of keeping its promises. The Republic had failed to provide effective welfare services, social stability, and high standards of national and local administration to a poverty-stricken, illiterate population in a backward country where rural traditions still reigned supreme.

Now, the reawakening of national conscience through the Oporto movement for Portuguese Revival (1912) strongly opposed this depressing, self-defeated and ultimately suicidal attitude. The healing antidote seemed to lie at hand if Portuguese society could be con-



vinced that moral and educational issues should take precedence over political disputes as the truly crucial factors of economic growth and social development.

To a large extent, the basic task was the boosting and redefining of the identity of national culture while remaining open to external influences that might enhance its modern profile. In other words, the movement's contention was that any programme for cultural action could not totally rely on imported models but instead should draw on the vast reserves of Portuguese history and moral character. The projection of the Portuguese Revival movement gradually exceeded the small coterie of Oporto intellectuals and spread all over the country, rallying supporters in the generation of S. Bruno, L. Coimbra, J. Cortesão, T. Pascoais, R. Proença, A. Sérgio, and Luis Cardim, of course.

Their ambitious project embraced the entire field of civic responsibilities and was put into practice by means of several doctrinal instruments. The first was the publication of *A Águia* (1910-1932), a highly respected eclectic journal devoted to literature, art, science, philosophy and social criticism. This was supplemented by a vast project for the publication of some two hundred books, including Portuguese classics and literary authors: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Shakespeare, Molière, Lope de Vega, and Ibsen, to limit myself to the dramatists. In addition, the movement sponsored pedagogical initiatives targeted for working-class education, such as public lectures, vocational courses and the so-called Popular Universities in large urban centres. Finally, it actively supported the first Faculty of Letters in Oporto founded in 1919, which succeeded in bringing together the members of an intellectual elite (like H. Cidade and F. Figueiredo in Romance literatures; and Luis Cardim in English) who became the mentors of outstanding generations of scholars and humanists.

At the beginning of the academic year 1919-20 the Faculty unanimously appointed Luis Cardim Professor of English Language and Literature. During the next decade, he busied himself with lecturing and undertaking scholarly research in the field of modern humanities,

with a special emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach to Anglo-Portuguese cultural relations.

During his previous experience as a secondary-school teacher of English, Luis Cardim had stayed in England and Germany (1907-08), taking up specialised studies in psychology, experimental phonetics, and language-teaching methodology. These made him familiar with the innovative, pioneering practice of the direct method, which he introduced in Portugal in a rather eclectic way. Nevertheless, however deep his involvement with didactics, his list of publications clearly indicates that he still favoured a unifying philological paradigm and conceived the discipline of English as providing a focal point for linguistics, literary studies, and cultural history.

Himself a poet and a translator of poets, Luis Cardim developed scholarly work on a variety of subjects: the identity of Syr Torrent of Portyngale, the hero of a medieval verse romance; the controversy on the authorship of the famous love letters of a Portuguese nun, attributed to Mariana Alcoforado; the description of a sixteenth-century printed copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* kept in the Oporto Public Library; Portuguese-English grammarians and eighteenth-century spoken English; Anglo-Spanish grammars and grammarians; Geoffrey of Monmouth's work and Portuguese medieval genealogy; and a history of the reception of Camões in English literature.

Most of these essays were later collected under the general title of *Literary and Linguistic Studies* (1929) and should be appraised in connection with Luis Cardim's lifelong interest in the *vexata quaestio* of Shakespeare's life and art, which he discussed in several publications.<sup>4</sup> A bilingual edition of *Julius Caesar*, with translation, critical introduction and notes met with unusual success.<sup>5</sup> The same applies to *Shakespeare and English Drama* (1931), a historical survey of the area, with a discussion of the problems of authorship and authenticity of Shake-

<sup>4</sup> Luis Cardim, *Estudos de Literatura e Linguística* (Porto: Faculdade de Letras, 1929).

<sup>5</sup> Luis Cardim (trans.), *A Tragédia de Júlio César*, (Porto: Renascença Portuguesa, 1925; Lisboa: Tipografia da Papelaria Fernandes, 1948).

speare's canon and a review of the plays' critical fortune.<sup>6</sup> In the forties, Cardim published a paper on Shakespeare's likeness and portraits (1943) and finally *The Problems of Hamlet* (1949) where he took issue with Laurence Olivier's film version of the tragedy.<sup>7</sup> In general terms, he disagreed with a number of aspects: (i) the downgrading of Guildenstern, Rosencrantz and Fortinbras in the plot's structure, (ii) the fact that the psychological portrait of some characters is devoid of subtle *chiaroscuro* gradation, and (iii) the actor's colloquial delivery of verse which allegedly jeopardised the dignity of tragedy.

In fact, it would be idle to summarise the results or to review at length each of these contributions that met with public and academic approval at the time of publication and can be considered as landmarks in the critical reception of Shakespearean drama in this country. Suffice it to say that, on the whole, Luis Cardim's essays comply with the demands of high-quality standards of scholarly work and show that his readings on Shakespeare integrated the seminal contributions of Alexander Schmidt, E. A. Abbott, F. J. Furnivall, E. K. Chambers, John Dover Wilson, and others.

Largely due to Luis Cardim's scientific prestige and didactic merit, the Faculty of Letters of Oporto pioneered the institutionalization of Shakespearean studies in Portugal which did not spread southwards to the Universities of Coimbra and Lisbon until the second half of the twentieth century.

Among Luis Cardim's publications, this essay will approach his version of *Julius Caesar*, surely a text that challenged his double capacity as a scholar and a practised translator, who had coped with the task of rewriting Chaucer, Wyatt, Sidney, Ben Jonson, Milton, Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, Whitman, and others.

It would be appropriate to note that Luis Cardim's lifelong in-

<sup>6</sup> Luis Cardim, *Shakespeare e o Drama Inglês*, Lisboa, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> *A Vida de Shakespeare (Factos, Lendas e Problemas)* (Lisboa: Seara Nova, 1943); and *Os Problemas do 'Hamlet' e as suas dificuldades cénicas*, (Lisboa: Seara Nova, 1949).

volvement with literary communication had acquainted him with the art of making translation conform with essential features of the source text, while introducing the necessary changes to make it acceptable within the target culture. In more than one way, this had prepared Luis Cardim for the daunting task of (i) dealing with historical events set in ancient Rome but (ii) aesthetically filtered through English late Renaissance poetic tragedy and (iii) translating the text into a variety of twentieth century dramatic language that might appeal both to ordinary readers and playhouse audiences.

That Luis Cardim intended his text to be adequate to theatrical performance can hardly be overlooked by anyone who reads his paper on "The killing of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's tragedy," which contains clear evidence of his views on the complementary nature of "reading translations" and "acting translations."

The author's starting point is a close inspection of the text itself where Caesar's assassination by stabbing indiscriminately points to *swords* (six occurrences) and *daggers* (three occurrences) as the weapons of the crime. Multiple strategies are adopted in order to solve this glaring contradiction: (i) the suggestion that, strictly speaking, those terms are not synonyms as one is being used in a rather super-ordinate, comprehensive way while the other has a more specific meaning; (ii) the comparison of Shakespeare's text with his chief source, that is North's rendering of the French translation by Amyot of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*; (iii) the analogy with a recent French translation of *Julius Caesar* by Louis de Grammont and the latter's use of "*poignard*" for "dagger" and both "*arme*" and "*épée*" for "sword"; (iv) a collation of parallel passages in Shakespeare's Roman plays like *Coriolanus*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; (v) a scrutiny of former editions, namely those prepared by W. A. Wright, A. W. Verity, and Horace H. Furness; (vi) a study of sixteenth-century arms and their iconography which yields the "*rapier*" as another element in the series. The conclusion to be drawn from this impressive amount of information supports Luis Cardim's view that daggers and swords had been used in Shakespeare's time by con-

spirators in the assassination scene. A few present-day literary critics may tend to dismiss such concentration on minute details but accurate, unambiguous denotation surely ranks high among the priorities of literary translators concerned with the staging of Shakespeare's plays. After all, in Luis Cardim's own words,

[...] whatever may be said in defence of literary liberties, it is not to be denied that it would be incongruous for an actor to speak of a "sword" while holding a dagger before the whole audience.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Luis Cardim's translation of the text of *Julius Caesar* from the Globe edition (1864) prepared by W. G. Clark, J. Glover, and W. A. Wright should be considered the earliest attempt in this country to combine literary scholarship and criticism in order to supply an acting translation of Shakespeare's tragedy. In other words, this could be taken as a prime example of the multiple ways in which serious academic work can be a reliable source of information and inspiration on which the performing arts and artists can draw.

A detailed discussion of Luis Cardim's version would probably yield interesting examples of what translation scholars often term the preliminary, the initial and operational rules, i.e. the historical conditions, the translator's options and the discourse requirements that constrain and regulate the actual production of the target text. But this has been chosen as the main theme of another paper where the methodology of Descriptive Translation Studies will be extensively applied.

However, it should be stressed that the translator's aim has been scrupulous fidelity to his source, in so far as this is possible in a translation in metrical form. Practically speaking, this involves the adoption of a principle of relevance according to which rhyme and accessory words or phrases can be missed out from sentences whenever they hamper the easy, rhythmical flow of verse.<sup>9</sup> In addition, every

<sup>8</sup> Cardim, *Estudos de Literatura e Linguística*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Cardim, *Estudos de Literatura e Linguística*, 28.

care has been taken to preserve the balance between archaic and trivial diction, ambiguities and puns, and to deal with the problem of rendering English sixteenth-century forms of address into the complex twentieth-century Portuguese system.

Instead of providing a minute evaluation of Luis Cardim's achievement, attention will now be focused on a rather baffling situation. In a way, one cannot help wondering what may have driven Luis Cardim in 1925 to single out *Julius Caesar* for translation, especially if one bears in mind that that very play had been translated twice in the ten-year span from 1913 to 1923. In fact, as early as 1913, D. Ramos had included his version in the series of Shakespeare's works issued by Lello and none other than the Oporto movement for Portuguese Revival had commissioned A. J. Anselmo to undertake a new translation, eventually published in 1916.<sup>10</sup> So, there hardly seems to have been a plausible reason for a third translation of the same Roman play, and yet this *was* the tragedy that Luis Cardim busied himself with.

In due time, biographers are likely to come up with relevant materials and convincing explanations, but from the historian's point of view it largely remains a matter for conjecture. On the one hand, one could say that the tragedy has interested Portuguese readers ever since António Petronilho Lamarão published the translation of one of its purple patches (1879), predictably Mark Antony's funeral oration in Act 3, scene 2.<sup>11</sup>

But, on the other hand, emphasis should perhaps shift from Cardim's probable motivations to a full consideration of the singular ways in which the play's theme seemed to acquire topicality and respond to collective anxieties in Portugal in 1925. In fact, the final years of the Portuguese constitutional monarchy (1907-1910) and the

<sup>10</sup> *Julius Caesar*, translated by Domingos Ramos, *Júlio César*, (Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1913); and translated by A. J. Anselmo, *Julio César*, (Porto: Renascença Portuguesa, 1916).

<sup>11</sup> *Oração Fúnebre de Marcus Antonius*, translated by António Petronillo Lamarão (Lisbon, 1879).

sixteen-years of the first republican regime (1910-1926) were marked by civil strife, social upheaval, and political turmoil. Against this gloomy background one can make out the tragic flaw of the Braganza regicide in 1908 and the distinctly autocratic tendencies of dictatorial governments supported by upper bourgeois groups headed by João Franco (1907), Pimenta de Castro (1915), and Sidónio Pais (1917), himself a victim of political assassination. As political instability worsened and administration was disorganised in the context of the First World War and the economic depression of the twenties, the tragedy of *Julius Caesar* became an apposite aesthetic correlative for current issues in Portugal. It provided an opportunity to discuss and re-evaluate the role of violence in history, as a means of crushing would-be tyrannical power. Collective fear and pity for the chaotic situation in this country turned into an obsession that the experience of Shakespeare's tragedy could possibly overcome.

Luis Cardim went on working through the first thirty years of the Salazar regime, which managed to outlive him by sixteen years. His staunch support of liberal, democratic, old-republican values obviously made him a member of the country's opposition. That may have been one of the reasons why it has proved impossible to determine whether government censorship and the powers that be ever relaxed their ban on *Julius Caesar* because of the play's allegedly threatening subversive nature.

One can only hope that the recent renewal of interest in Shakespearean translation in the University of Oporto under the leadership of Gomes da Torre will follow Luis Cardim's example of hard work and sound judgement in the preparation of another version of the plays. Hopefully this new version will combine the joint efforts of scholars, translators, and theatre directors for the benefit of a discerning public and readership in the bay of Portugal.

## Notes on Contributors

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nent directors in France and abroad, including Stéphane Braunschweig, Irina Brook, Matthias Langhoff, Georges Lavaudant, Luca Ronconi, and Peter Zadek. For the cinema he has done a dubbed version of *Henry V* and Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*. He is currently preparing a new bilingual edition of *Shakespeare's Complete Works* for the Pléiade series published by Gallimard, the first two volumes of which (devoted to the *Tragedies*) appeared in 2002. His translations have won many prizes (Molière, Prix Osiris, Prix Halpérine-Kaminsky).

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